

# HeartCry

MAGAZINE

## PERSECUTION

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

UPDATES FROM  
MYANMAR, NEPAL, PERU, UGANDA, ITALY, AND CANADA

# GREETINGS

For years the HeartCry staff has sought the Lord regarding our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering for the Name; the Lord has been kind to open the door in small ways for us to serve the persecuted church, especially in Asia. In the last month, we have been prayerfully involved in the sufferings of our fellow workers in the Wa region of Myanmar. In September, nearly one hundred pastors were imprisoned, and many churches were destroyed. In response, we sent out prayer requests to believers throughout the world, and we know that many responded with faithful intercession.

As a result of all that has happened in the last month, we decided that an article on a biblical view of persecution might be helpful for our readers, along with an appeal to “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).

This morning, as I sat down to write this article, we received the news that the imprisoned pastors in Myanmar have been released! We do not know how or why, nor what their current status with the governing officials is. Nevertheless, we give thanks to God and rejoice in the hope that the Ruler of kings has overruled their judgments against His people.

*“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.” (1 Peter 4:12-14)*

Your brother,  
Paul Washer

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“THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,  
AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.”

(ROMANS 15:21)





# PERSECUTION

## A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

BY PAUL WASHER

### THE ROOT OF PERSECUTION

*“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” — Genesis 3:15*

This passage is often referred to as the *prote-vangelium* or “first gospel” of the Scriptures. Here the great truths of Christ’s work of redemption are revealed in kernel form—Satan would be defeated and God’s people delivered and restored through the bruised heel (*i.e.* the death and resurrection) of the promised Messiah. “The gospels and epis-

cles are but the expansion, fulfillment, [and] culmination of the *prote-vangelium*.”<sup>1</sup>

As beautiful as this promise is, it is important to recognize that it is accompanied by the announcement of a war that would rage throughout the history of the church until the Second Coming of Christ and the consummation of all things. My use of the term “war” is not hyperbole or poetic embellishment; rather, it is an understatement! Over the millennia of world history, this war has resulted in the suffering and martyrdom of saints without number.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, p.38



According to our text, four parties are involved in this war. On one side are the serpent and his seed. On the other side stand the woman and her seed.

The serpent in Eden was a physical creature that was created by God, but behind its malice was a greater and more malignant spiritual force that elsewhere is identified as the devil (Revelation 12:9). Satan is the real culprit God addresses here. But who is his seed? The New Testament identifies this seed as the *whole of fallen humanity*. A greater and more offensive condemnation of man could hardly be suggested, but it is nevertheless true. Having rejected the person and will of God, fallen man shares a similar malignant nature with Satan and has placed himself in league with him. Jesus Himself told the unbelieving Jews who opposed Him, “You are of your father the devil” (John 8:44); and the Apostle John used similarly strong verbiage in his first epistle (3:8-10).

Opposite the devil and his followers are Eve—“the mother of all the living” (Genesis 3:20)—and her seed. In a general sense, the word “seed” here refers to all those throughout redemptive history who acknowledge the person and rule of God, are justified by faith, and live in submission to His word. However, ultimately, the word points specifically to the person of Jesus Christ, who defeats Satan at the cross and

strikes him with a mortal wound. “This hostility begins with the beast and the woman as individuals. Yet their experience is shared by their offspring too; the serpent and woman are distinct from their offspring yet also one and the same with them. Here we have the common case where an individual represents many. Eve and her adversary are the progenitors of a lifelong struggle that will persist until a climactic moment when the woman’s offspring (*i.e.* Christ) will achieve the upper hand.”<sup>2</sup>

When we stand at a distance and survey Genesis 3:15 within the context of the entirety of the Scriptures, we see that the enmity between the offspring of the serpent and that of the woman has two primary fulfillments or applications.

*First*, the prophecy points to the epic struggle between Satan and the Messiah on the cross of Calvary. There the Messiah received a “bruise,” for He did indeed die; but it was in the end no lethal blow, for He rose again and ascended to the right hand of God! The death of Christ satisfied the demands of God’s justice against His people “so that God might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). Now all accusations against God and

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth A. Matthews, *The New American Commentary*, Genesis 1:1-11:26, pp.245-246



His sinful people are silenced! The powerful accuser has been thrown down and rendered powerless (Hebrews 2:14)!

*Second*, the prophecy points to two distinct groups within humanity—the redeemed and regenerated children of God who live according to His word; and the spiritually dead children of the devil who walk according to the ways of their father and prince. These two factions have

been at enmity with one another since the fall and will continue to be at enmity until the return of Christ. The children of God “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Revelation 14:4). But the children of the devil are sons of disobedience, who love the darkness (Ephesians 2:1-3; John 3:20). They have no desire to enter the kingdom of heaven, and they oppose all those who do (Matthew 23:13).

## THE CAUSE OF PERSECUTION

Having considered the root of persecution, we will now consider its cause. It is understandable that the unrighteous would reject a righteous God, that the proud would reject salvation by way of the Cross, and that the rebellious and insubordinate would reject God’s rule. But why should those who want no such God be at enmity with those who do? Why does the world even care about a tiny remnant of individuals scattered throughout the globe who identify themselves with a poor Jewish carpenter who lived 2,000 years ago? Should not the devotees of a “crucified god” be pitied rather than persecuted? How is it that Christians, their Savior, their book, and their message incite such enmity? There are two primary reasons.

The *first reason* for the world’s hostility toward Christianity is powerfully set forth by Christ

Himself in John 3:19-20: “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.” Fallen humanity hates the light of God’s righteousness and any of God’s people who might reflect or proclaim that light. In the book of Romans, Paul describes the unregenerate of this world as “haters” (1:30) and “enemies” (5:10) of God who are “hostile to God” (8:7) and “full of murder” (1:29). Thus, they hate any revelation of God’s righteousness, whether it be through His Scriptures or through the testimony of God’s people. The revelation that they cannot explain away, they will ignore; what they cannot ignore, they will distort



and malign; and what they cannot malign, they will seek to eradicate. This is truest when the gospel is preached most clearly and when God's people live most purely. The attitude of the wicked in Isaiah's day continues until today: "Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 30:11).

The world's hostile response to the righteousness of God and His people is powerfully illustrated in Cain's murder of his brother Abel (Genesis 4:3-8). According to John, Cain "was of the evil one and slew his brother" because Cain's deeds "were evil" and Abel's deeds "were righteous." The apostle then concludes that we should "not be surprised" if the world hates us (I John 3:12-13). "It is not that Cain by murdering his brother became the child of the devil; but, being a child of the devil, his actions were evil and culminated in the murder of his brother. The reason given for the murder is that his brother's acts were righteous. Righteousness draws hatred from the devil and hatred from the children of the devil. Darkness cannot tolerate light; immorality, morality; hatred, love; or greed, sacrifice. All the words of darkness are shown

to be what they really are by the light, hatred that can lead to such brutality as Cain's slaughter of Abel."<sup>3</sup>

The *second reason* for the world's hostility toward Christianity is that the world is a pawn of Satan. We must never forget that the devil is "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and that "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (I John 5:19). He is "the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience" so that they walk according to his will (Ephesians 2:2) and are "held captive by him to do his will" (II Timothy 2:26). Satan is the original murderer (John 8:44) and the instigator of murder (I John 3:12). He "prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour" (I Peter 5:8). He desires only to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10). He hates Christ and His people with an unbridled and unmitigated passion. He seeks to lead the weak into sin and the strong to the gallows. He is more than capable of stirring up the entire world to "make war with the saints to overcome them" (Revelation 13:7-10).

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<sup>3</sup> Glenn W. Baker, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol.12, p.335

## OUR RESPONSE TO PERSECUTION

As Christians from the West who have suffered so very little

for Christ, we may find it difficult or even embarrassing to consider



the proper response to persecution. However, we must remember that our authority to teach or write on a subject is not determined by our experience but by the Word of God. Although it would be beyond the scope of this article to set forth all that the Scriptures teach about the believer's response to persecution, we can mention a few of the most important truths to consider.

*1) We should prepare for persecution beforehand by availing ourselves of every means to grow in grace and personal Christlikeness.* We should give ourselves to daily Bible study, private prayer, and faithful membership in a local church while we have the freedom to do so. There may come a day when these privileges are lost to us.

*2) We should be faithful to use our gifts for the evangelization of the lost and the edification of the church.* We should make the most of every opportunity for growth and ministry so that we have no regrets when the doors of opportunity have closed (John 9:4).

*3) We should especially strive to grow in our knowledge of the attributes and works of God.* In the midst of persecution, the believer is often burdened and weakened with doubts about God's character and wisdom. The greatest bulwark and buttress against this kind of confusion is a biblical knowledge of God. If we know who God is, we do not

have to know what He is doing or why He is doing it. Daniel 11:32 assures us that "the people who know their God will display strength and take action" in the midst of conflict and persecution. Prior to his own martyrdom, the Apostle Paul wrote, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (II Timothy 1:12). Only those who truly know the God whom they have believed can truly "entrust their souls" to Him (I Peter 4:19).

*4) We should examine our lives and conduct to be sure that we are suffering for Christ and not for some character flaw or misdeed.* The Apostle Peter penned, "For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God" (I Peter 2:20). And again, "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name" (I Peter 4:15-16). Finally, "Keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame" (I Peter 3:16). In our self-examination, we must also remember that we



are called, so far as it depends upon us, to be at peace with all men (Romans 12:18), including the governing authorities that have been established by God (Romans 13:1). We are to pray “on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority” (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Furthermore, we are to “be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake”; and we are to “render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor” (Romans 13:5, 7). The only exception to this directive is when the laws of man contradict the clearly revealed commands of God (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29).

*5) We should trust in the sovereignty, faithfulness, and purpose of God.* In times of severe trial and persecution, our souls may venture to ask dangerous questions. “Has God lost control,” you may question, “or is our suffering unnoticed?” But Christ answers, “Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.”<sup>4</sup> “But,” you continue, “has God abandoned us? Are we forgotten? Are we alone?” Again, Christ replies, “Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on

the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands.”<sup>5</sup> “But is this suffering without purpose? Is it meaningless? Vain?” you venture further. “The testing of your faith produces endurance,” Christ responds again. “You have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup> Once more you ask, “Is the gospel failing? Will the Great Commission be defeated?” And once more Christ answers, “You suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal, but the word of God is not imprisoned.”<sup>7</sup>

*6) We should fear God above men.* “The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted” (Proverbs 29:25). We may not be able to eliminate our fear of man totally, but we can overcome it by comparing the strength of God with the strength of men. A timid man may fear two different opponents; if he is wise, however, he will choose to offend the weaker and not the stronger (Matthew 10:28).

*7) We should look to the prospects of eternal reward and eternal loss.* Jesus warned in Mat-

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 10:29-31

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 49:15-16

<sup>6</sup> James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7

<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy 2:9



thew 10:32-39, “Everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven... And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.” He promised in Matthew 5:10-12, “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; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” A similar promise is found in I Peter 4:14: “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

8) *We should pray for wisdom, speaking and acting with great caution.* On one hand, we must avoid unbridled zeal and a desire for martyrdom. On the other, we must overcome the idolatry of self-preservation and the inclination to compromise. In the midst of teaching about the church’s mission and the opposition of evil men, Jesus told His disciples, “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so

be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). In Damascus, the Apostle Paul ran away from persecution (II Corinthians 11:32-33), but in Jerusalem he ran toward it (Acts 21:10-14). Only the wisdom that comes from God through prayer and the study of the Scriptures can guide us in such times.

9) *We should seek to be a witness for Christ and His gospel.* Peter admonishes us to set apart “Christ as Lord in your hearts” in the midst of persecution, “always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (I Peter 3:14-15). Still, a balance is required in this matter. We must be bold in our witness, but we must be discerning as well. Jesus warned in Matthew 7:6, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” We must be patient with those who oppose our message; we must be wise in determining when to speak and when to be silent; we must be diligent in our studies that we may always be ready; we must be unashamed of the gospel to which we have been called; and we must not be anxious. Remember Jesus’ promise in Matthew 10:19-20: “But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you



in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”

10) *We should seek the well-being of our persecutors.* Jesus commanded his disciples to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:44-45). The Apostle Paul wrote, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God.... Do not be overcome by

evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19-21). We are to follow in the footsteps of our Savior who did not revile or threaten when suffering at the hands of His enemies, rather “entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:21-23). Rising to such a level of Christlikeness in the midst of persecution is an absolute impossibility for the flesh. It requires the indwelling word and the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

## OUR RESPONSE TO THE PERSECUTED

The church in the West is relatively free from persecution. Thus, it is our responsibility to take up the cause of the churches and individual believers around the world who are suffering. This is not optional for the local church; it is an essential ministry that serves as a litmus test of our maturity, of the sincerity of our love for God’s people, and of the genuineness of our profession. In 1 John 3:16-18, the Apostle John wrote:

*“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”*

Although it is not specifically mentioned, persecution would have been understood by John’s readers as one of the common causes of the impoverishment of believers in the first century (Hebrews 10:34). Thus, according to John, if we have knowledge of our brothers and sisters in need due to any form of persecution, we must open our hearts and act on their behalf. If we do not, we demonstrate a lovelessness that casts doubt upon the genuineness of our profession and that may even expose us to divine discipline (Proverbs 21:13).

Another text that has bearing on our responsibility to the persecuted church is Hebrews 13:3: “Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are



in the body.” The command to “remember” denotes more than mere thought; it implies action. If a mother tells her child to remember to bathe, she is not suggesting that the child merely think about it or ponder the virtues of it, but to actually do it! In the same way, like John in our previous text, the author of Hebrews is saying, “Let us remember the persecuted in deed and truth.” The phrase “as though in prison with them” may mean that we are to care for them as though we ourselves were suffering the same fate. It may also mean that they are to be on our mind and moving us to action as though we were constantly beholding them in their imprisonment. Either way, the central truth is that their predicament is to be continually before us and spurring us to action. We should be moved to compassion and service for our persecuted brothers and sisters.

I John 3:16-18 and Hebrews 13:3 both give great incentives to serve the persecuted church and our brothers and sisters who are suffering for their love and faithfulness to Christ and His gospel. However, the greatest incentive is found in Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus describes the day when He will return and separate the sheep from the goats:

*“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the*

*kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’ Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*



The above text has been used by countless ministers and ministries to validate their call to reach out to the world with practical works of charity and compassion. It is no exaggeration to say that this is the “cornerstone text” of prison ministries, hunger relief organizations, medical teams, clothing banks, and countless other Christian ministries which seek to spread the gospel by ministering to the practical needs of a lost world. However, some caution should be exercised in applying the text in this way.

It is good and right and biblical to minister to the physical needs of others in hopes of bringing them to Christ; however, this is not the intention or purpose of Christ’s discourse in this passage. He is not teaching that our confession of faith is validated by our willingness to minister to a lost and hurting world. Rather, He is teaching that we demonstrate the reality of our confession by our willingness to identify with and minister to the needs of *Christians* who are suffering imprisonment, destitution, and persecution for His sake. In this crucial text, those who are hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, sick, and imprisoned are not lost men who find themselves in such dire straits because of their sin; they are believers who are suffering for the sake of a good conscience before God and their loyalty to Christ! They are children

of God and brothers of Christ—so closely identified with Him through faith that to bless or neglect them is to do the same to Christ.

When we understand the proper context of Jesus’ teaching, we see that He is illustrating a great truth: selfless love toward individual believers and the church collectively is one of the great evidences of the new birth. In His discourse on the Final Judgment, Jesus declares that His sheep are those who love the brethren, even at great cost or risk to themselves. He invites them to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from before the very foundation of the world. In contrast, He condemns those who demonstrate their lovelessness toward His brethren by closing their hearts and hands to them in their time of greatest need. He culls them as goats and sends them off to eternal destruction.

Imagine a small group of second century Christians meeting secretly in the catacombs on the far edge of the city. When the meeting is over, they return to their homes, each taking a different route in order to avoid suspicion. Everything seems uneventful until the next day, when news reaches the small congregation that two of the brethren were captured before they reached their home. Immediately, a meeting is called, and the exact situation of the two brothers is revealed. They had been badly beaten and



imprisoned without food, water, or necessary medical treatment. Their condition is grave.

In light of what they learn, the little congregation is now faced with a moral dilemma, a test of true discipleship. If they do nothing, their brothers in Christ will certainly perish (first-century prisons were not nearly as hospitable as Western prisons are today). However, if they seek out their brothers, they risk being identified and possibly suffering the same fate. Furthermore, the required food, water, medicine, and clothing will be expensive; and most in the congregation are poor laborers and slaves.

As they discuss the matter among themselves, a division begins to appear. Most are ready to go, regardless of the cost. They reason that Christ has laid down His life for them—they ought to do the same for their brethren! They cannot say that the love of God abides in them if they close their hearts against their brothers who are suffering for the sake of the Name. However, a small minority disagrees. In their opinion, a visit to the prison is suicidal and would accomplish nothing. Furthermore, they argue, the majority's unnecessary reaction is merely the result of an unrealistic zeal and a dangerous religious fanaticism that has been growing in the church for some time. Reason dictates that they should wait until things cool down a bit.

After only a few more minutes of debate, the decision is made by the majority. The necessary items are gathered, and an envoy is prayerfully sent from the church. They visit the prison, bandage their brothers' wounds, clothe their naked bodies, and give them food and drink. The small minority who declined to participate in such a foolish endeavor eventually return to the world or leave the church in search of a more reasonable fellowship.

We see here, as in Jesus' discourse, a separation between the converted and the unconverted. Those who chose to stand with their imprisoned brothers demonstrated that they were truly born again and that the love of God abided in them. The self-centered and self-preserving minority demonstrated that their profession of faith and their love for the brethren was with "word and tongue" and not "deed and truth." Like any good work, our love for the brethren does not lead to salvation; it is its *result*. The same regenerating work of the Spirit that results in faith (leading to justification) also results in a genuine love for the brethren (leading to service)—especially for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the globe. ■





## WHAT'S NEXT?

**A**fter considering such a weighty topic, it is natural to wonder what can be done. As Westerners, most of us are very far removed from heavy persecution—it can be difficult to grasp what we can and should do for our persecuted brothers and sisters across the globe. How can we be more involved? How can we help our needy brethren? It is not an easy question; but there are at least two very clear ways we can serve the persecuted church.

**1) Pray.** The first and most important thing you can do is pray. To some, this may seem a “small” thing, but it is not! Our Lord delights in answering the prayers of His children. He uses our prayers to accomplish His magnificent design, to move mountains, to effect change. Prayer’s importance cannot be overstated and should not be underestimated! Never

judge prayer to be a useless or barely useful commodity. If you would serve your persecuted brethren, there is likely nothing you could do to help them more than to pray for them.

**2) Stay informed.** Another important thing you can do is stay informed. Search for news of the persecuted church, so you can be aware of some of the specific things these children of God are enduring. This is useful for two reasons. First, it keeps your persecuted brothers and sisters at the forefront of your mind, which in turn will compel you to go often to the Lord on their behalf. Second, it will help you be specific in your intercessory prayer. There is much virtue in using logic and order in prayer. Consider Job’s approach to supplication in Job 23:4: “I will present my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments.” Or think of Moses



when he pleaded on behalf of Israel, reminding God that His own reputation was at stake (Exodus 32:11-13). Possessing knowledge of current events and of God's character is a tremendous help in effective prayer.

In the following pages, you will read of a few cases of ongoing persecution among missionaries whom HeartCry knows and, in some cases, supports. Also,

below are provided a few recent videos giving updates regarding current persecution in Asia. Keep in mind that these are fluid situations that are changing day by day. We will do our best to acquire and post updates in order to keep you informed. You can find these as we post them on our website: [heartcrymissionary.com/mission-updates](http://heartcrymissionary.com/mission-updates). ■

### Persecution in Myanmar

An important explanation of recent persecution in Myanmar with Paul Washer and Jamey T.

 [bit.ly/hc95-video01](http://bit.ly/hc95-video01)



### The Persecuted Church in Asia

A discussion with Paul Washer and Asia Coordinators Jamey T. and Jeff S. about persecution across Asia.

 [bit.ly/hc95-video02](http://bit.ly/hc95-video02)

### Persecuted Church Update

News and prayer requests regarding the ongoing persecution of pastors in Myanmar.

 [bit.ly/hc95-video03](http://bit.ly/hc95-video03)







## MYANMAR

# THE PAIN AND SORROWS OF PERSECUTION

JAMEY T.

**T**ertullian wrote, “[T]he blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” However, the “benefits” of persecution are often glamorized, resulting in many Christians from a safe distance concluding that persecution is preferred over “a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.” Certainly, God has allowed suffering for the gospel to test the church and use it for good (1 Pet. 4:12-14). God used persecution against the Jerusalem Church so “those who had been scattered went about preaching the word” beyond the confines of the ancient city (Acts 8:1, 4).

Nevertheless, persecution has often hindered the church by forbidding the saints to assemble for worship and has greatly curtailed the spread of the gospel in the world. In some areas of intense opposition the church has been decimated and destroyed. Would

anyone argue that the church was aided when the translation of God’s Word into different languages was prohibited prior to the Reformation? Did the brutal opposition of the church in Mozambique, Russia, and Cambodia during the 20th century benefit the church? Is the “catacomb church” in North Korea healthier today because of the despotic rule of Kim Jong-un?

We must neither glamorize persecution nor be indifferent to the plight of saints who endure suffering for the sake of the gospel. We are taught to “remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourself also are in the body” (Heb. 13:3). We are asking you to remember in prayer the persecuted church. Recently, we have received disturbing reports of increased maltreatment by authorities upon believers in China, Vietnam, and Myanmar.



## ◀ Two of the imprisoned pastors

Particularly, remember to intercede for the saints recently apprehended in Myanmar. The United Wa State Army (UWSA), suddenly and without provocation, began to incarcerate pastors, destroy church buildings, and force Christians to enlist in the army. The aggression by UWSA has affected many Christians, including HeartCry pastors Rufus and Chris. Thankfully, Rufus and Chris are in hiding and have escaped imprisonment, but Chris's church building was demolished. We have been greatly encouraged by the work of God through Chris and Rufus; many animists have come to faith this year through their ministry. However, the persecution has stopped the churches they serve from gathering publicly, and the evangelistic meetings among the villages have ceased. Elijah, HeartCry's partner in Myanmar, reported the following:

*"As an inevitable result of religious persecutions taking place now in the special region, our missionaries Chris and Rufus have had to abscond to KT with their families. They are safe with us now. There are ten pastors and evangelists under our association and many more from other organizations across the region in the special region. Hundreds of pastors, church leaders, and well-known devoted Christians—even some army officers themselves—*

*have been detained and taken away so that no contacts can be made with them. Four of our pastors are among the detainees. They are poorly fed in the police station. Family and friends cook for them and send the food through the police officers, but no one knows if the food is delivered as it is designated.*

*"All churches have had their buildings either demolished or sealed off. Chris's church is also demolished. Christian gatherings and worship are banned. We don't know yet what will be done to the detainees. But we hope that they will be released once they have been questioned. Please pray for Chris and Rufus and their families to settle in here until it is safe for them to return there. More importantly, please pray for the believers and their families so that they would remain faithful and persevere in difficult times by God's special grace."*

Pray for the pastors that they "will be rescued from perverse and evil men" (2 Thess. 3:2). Pray that the saints will be emboldened to make known the glorious gospel of Christ (Eph. 6:19) and will be given grace to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3). Pray for the Christians who are incarcerated, that they will be treated with dignity by the authorities and will be allowed to return home. Lastly, intercede for those in authority in order for the church in these areas to "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Tim. 2:2). ■





NEPAL

Gopal G.

# GROWTH THROUGH TRIBULATIONS

JEFF S.

**R**eligious persecution continues to rise in Nepal with the passing of each day. This month the government upheld a law that prohibits the preaching of the gospel. This anti-conversion law carries with it a sentence of up to five years in prison or a 50,000 Nepali rupee fine, if found guilty of teaching or distributing Christian material in an attempt to proselytize

anyone. Even though these pressures mount, the missionaries on the field are resolute in their commitment. They have counted the cost. In fact, some have even expressed hope that these persecutions will remove that which is false while also causing that which is true to be purified.

Below is a snapshot of some of the troubles and victories that are taking place in the lives of the men in Nepal:

## GOPAL G:

This has been a trying month for Gopal, as he has faced numerous hardships, hindrances,

and persecutions. The owner of the house he rented recently kicked him out and will not allow



him to stay there anymore. Just two years prior, it was this same owner who helped him when others in the community refused to rent to him because of his faith. Now, the owner accuses Gopal of forcing his in-laws to become Christians. One night, in a drunken rage, he forced Gopal to leave the house. Although this incident has caused Gopal great personal pain, he has found strength in Christ. He has forgiven this owner and still continues to reach out to the in-laws in order to comfort them. His desire is to see the entire family come to know the Lord. He longs to follow the pattern of Christ and bless those who persecute him. He has now moved to a neighboring village.

For the past several months, Gopal has been ministering in a remote unreached village deep in the mountains. He has seen the Lord's hand in this work, and a tiny fellowship has been formed there. However, he was recently stopped on the road by a group of radical Hindus while trying to enter this village. They would not permit him to pass. They threat-

ened him with physical violence and forced him to turn around and go home. Even though he was upset, this did not deter him. In fact, he made plans to park his motorcycle at another village the following week, and then travel by foot over the mountains in order to continue to minister to this fellowship. This would not be an easy hike, especially for a 62-year-old man. The hike would have taken around five hours to reach the village. However, the police interrupted these plans. The following week, Gopal was called into the police station and forbidden to go into this village without a written letter from the district office. This is an unwise approach, as the district office will then have record of all of the activities of his ministry. Please pray for strength, wisdom, protection, and boldness in this situation. Pray that the Lord would grant clarity on the best way forward.

He confidently writes, "I don't know how my life will end, but I know God's love and grace is with me forever."

## **KHEM C:**

This has been a month of difficulties for Khem as well, although his trials have come in a different form—he currently faces troubles with false teachers. They have persuaded some in his congregation to leave the fellowship. In fact, one couple has stirred up much trouble. They were upset

because Khem recently baptized a few people who had not been attending the church as long as they had. Khem explained his concerns and the purpose of baptism, but they were still upset. Several other believers in the church have also visited them in order to teach on the gospel.



The wife finally told those who were visiting her that she did not need salvation from sin; instead, all she needed was healing and a successful life. Attempts to speak about the true gospel seem to have fallen on deaf ears, and they now refuse to attend the church. Khem was heartbroken. In telling this story, he said, “I felt sorrow in my heart for their souls.”

This type of teaching is dominant and influential in Ne-

pal, which was exemplified this month when Khem had a visit from a man who was there only to seek physical healing. This gave the opportunity for the leaders of the church to share with him the gospel of Jesus Christ. Khem is not sure if this man will come to the church again, but it is his prayer that this man would come to know Christ and receive both spiritual and physical healing.

## RAM B:

This month has been a month of personal growth for Ram. Along with his Bible study, he has been studying the 9Marks book, *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert. This resource was recently translated into the Nepali language and printed. Upon reading the statement, “The gospel is the method of showing the beauty of Christ,” he was cut in his heart. He asked himself, “Am I showing the beauty of Christ in my life? Does my family show the beauty of Christ? Does my church show it?” These questions caused Ram to examine his life before

the Lord, and by His grace, the Spirit of God pointed out several mistakes. Ram writes, “I realized my weaknesses, and I’m taking them seriously. I’m repenting of my sin and trying to walk according to His Word. I am committing my life in Christ and praying that I will show the beauty of Christ in my life.”

Please pray for Ram as he continues to preach through the book of Colossians. Pray that the Lord would shine His face on this congregation as they look at the supremacy of the Savior. ■



Ram B.



PERU

## FELLOWSHIP AND JOY IN AFFLICTION

BY CARLOS GARCIA

*Carlos is the pastor of the Baptist church “Christ is the Only Hope” in one of the poorest, most dangerous areas of Sullana in northern Peru. He also helps with the training of mountain pastors through education by extension.*

### CHURCH LIFE

The Lord has allowed us to continue our Sunday sermon series through the book of Acts, and we have just finished chapter 11. Through the study of this book, the church has been helped by seeing that even our brothers and sisters in the earliest days of the church suffered afflictions, tribulations, and persecutions of different kinds, just as we continue to experience in our own day. Still, they were willing to give up their lives for the Lord; they remained faithful to the end.

I would say that one of the things that describes the congregation in which the Lord has placed me is suffering—suffer-

ing with joy. There are a lot of people in our church that suffer from illnesses, others face opposition from family members and spouses because of their commitment to Christ, and most live in serious poverty.

When we came to [Acts 5:41-42](#), we read that the apostles went away rejoicing because they had suffered for the cause of Christ. They felt a sense of honor in having been allowed to experience affliction in the name of Christ. This truth has helped us as a church to continue moving forward in the midst of our own afflictions. I have heard many of the brothers and sisters in our church say things like, “I’m



not going to abandon Christ. I'll continue pressing on. My faith is fixed on Christ, and even if I die because of it, I want my family to see that nothing could separate me from Him." Though our suffering is not to the same degree that we see in the book of Acts, it is still very present in the life of our church, and in the midst of it the Lord is giving us confidence to endure.

Asuncion, one of the brothers in our church, lost his vision in both eyes due to an illness. When he first became blind, I was really sad for him and felt powerless to help him. I asked him how he felt, how he was handling it. He told me with a smile, "Pastor, don't worry. I am well. I don't feel any fear or doubt. My joy is in the Lord because one day I will see Him, my Savior."

Felicita, a member of our church, suffers from osteoporosis and has lost the use of ninety percent of her body. Still, she is full of encouragement and faith. It is very difficult for her to come to our church meetings, so the members of our church have be-

gun going to her house where we have a worship service together. In those services she invites her relatives to join us, and they have an opportunity to hear the gospel.

Another church member, Isabel, is now a widow with two children. Everyone in the church is very conscious of her situation and the challenges she is facing. A group of brothers and sisters have begun meeting in her home for a Bible study in order to encourage her, and she has been very grateful for it. Also, the whole church generously gave an offering for her family and has committed to bringing food and other household supplies to her house every month.

Each of these examples is evidence of how the Lord has used the book of Acts to grow our church, as this is the kind of fellowship we see in the church in [Acts 2:42-47](#) and [Acts 4:34-35](#). The Lord has helped us to maintain a beautiful environment of unity, love, and mutual help among the believers. I trust He will continue to glorify Himself through these types of good works.

## SHARING THE GOSPEL

Another way that our study through Acts has helped us is in the area of evangelism. We have seen that while it is the pastor's responsibility to preach, it is not just the pastor who has the responsibility to proclaim Christ; that is the responsibility of all

believers. When persecution began in [Acts 8:4](#), it was not just the apostles who bore witness to Christ, but rather "those who had been scattered went about preaching the word." Proclaiming Christ should be a part of our entire life as Christians.

Some of the ways that we proclaim the gospel as a church are through our open-air meetings as well as through the meetings we have in homes where family members and friends are invited. Also, I have been reminding the church of the importance of sharing the gospel in all the different relationships we have: with our children, our relatives, our friends, etc. There is always an opportunity to talk about salvation in Christ. For example, when I was at the market, I overheard the lady that was working say, “There is so much evil in this world. It’s terrible.” And it gave me the opportunity to begin telling her about the condition of mankind in sin and the judgment to come and to tell her about the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. She listened to me while I spoke, but in the end she dismissed what I was saying. There are a lot of people who want to talk about the evil of this world, but they are not willing to hear what the Lord says about what we are—we who are the cause of the evil.

The Lord also gave me the opportunity this month to preach the gospel to more than a hundred people. A friend—a brother in Christ that attends a different congregation in our city—invited



Carlos preaching

me to preach at his father-in-law’s funeral. The funeral lasted three nights, and I was able to show the condition of the sinner, the need for salvation, and the justice and judgment of God. I do not know if anyone was converted through those sermons, but the word was preached. I saw that there were a lot of people who listened attentively, and I am thankful to God that He gave me this opportunity to sow His precious seed.

## FALSE TEACHING

In this district of the city, a lot of false teaching has been introduced. These false teach-

ers go to different houses and, though they talk about faith in Christ, teach that in order to



be saved you have to do certain things like fast, speak in tongues, and wear skirts instead of pants. They also put a lot of emphasis on casting out demons, healing, visions, and dreams. In many ways, the type of “Christianity” they are teaching looks a lot like witchcraft. They come into homes where someone is sick, they say there is a demon there, and they go through a series of rites. They pray and shout and “fight with Satan” until they say that the demon has left and the house is clean. Also, they teach a theology of prosperity: “If you give one hundred, God will give you one thousand.”

These false teachers have tried to visit some of our church members, since many of them suffer permanent illnesses. Thankfully none of them have been carried away by these false

doctrines. They have continued to be faithful to the Scriptures.

I am thankful to God for everything He allows us to do for His cause, knowing that none of this is done in vain. I ask you to pray for me and for our congregation. ■



"Christ Is the Only Hope" Baptist Church



UGANDA

## KAMPALA SEMINARS: CONTINUED GOSPEL GROWTH

BILL ISSA

*The Lord is doing something exciting with Bill Issa's training among Pentecostal pastors in Uganda. Over a year ago, Pastor Bill Issa was asked to lead a conference for a small group in the town of Fort Portal in Western Uganda. He conducted two conferences*

*there in June and October 2017 (highlighted in HeartCry Magazine Issue 92). For the third and fourth conferences in February and June 2018, Bill chose to host them in his home church in Kampala. Below, he shares his reasoning and the results.*

### FEBRUARY CONFERENCE

**Y**ou will remember that we had the two previous conferences in Fort Portal (Western Uganda), but we decided to start having them in Kampala for two reasons. One, we were not comfortable with the large number of women pastors compared to the number of men attending in Fort Portal. Two, pastors from other districts around the country wanted the same conferences in their own

districts. It would not be possible to travel that much and still care for our flock here. So we decided to start having them here in Kampala so that we mobilize only male pastors, and also because Kampala is central for the pastors from all the districts.

By the Lord's grace, we managed to have forty male pastors, from four different districts of Uganda as well as one pastor from South Sudan. We also had



five women who came from a Pentecostal church whose pastor is slowly falling in love with reformed theology. The pastor requested us to allow him bring these women with him (leaders in his church) because he wants them to be exposed to biblical teachings too, which was very fine with us.

The theme for our February conference was “Marks of a Healthy Church.” We had ten marks: 1) Knowing the Living God, 2) Biblical Church Discipline, 3) Biblical Church Membership, 4) Biblical Church Leadership, 5) Expository Preaching, 6) Biblical Evangelism, 7) Biblical View of the Gospel, 8) Biblical Theology, 9) Biblical View of Conversion, 10) Discipleship & Growth. One of our main speakers was fellow HeartCry missionary Sam Oluoch, pastor of Grace Baptist Church Kisumu, Kenya.

We held the conference on a weekend (Friday–Sunday) because it would be good to worship with some of the pastors who have been attending our conferences, so they can see how a worship service is conducted in a biblical manner. Many pastors went back to join their churches on Sunday, but thirteen pastors remained to have worship service with us at RBC, and it was very good seeing them in our midst. Many of them had never seen such a worship service until that Sunday.

We thank the Lord that many pastors are slowly getting interested in the truth of the Bible. We are being encouraged by comments like: “But you guys are more serious with the Word than Pentecostals,” “Your worship service is not entertaining but good and orderly,” and “I’m slowly loving the reformed theology.”

## JUNE CONFERENCE

For our June conference, we faced some positive challenges, and we thank the Lord for them. Our tent of meeting is promising to let us down soon, as far as these pastors’ conferences are concerned! If the numbers increase again in October, then we’ll be obliged to rent a small tent to add onto ours. We also had a larger number of pastors from far districts, which forced us to get a second hotel for more rooms and, therefore, took more work to drop them off every evening and pick

them up every morning.

This time we had pastors from eight different districts of Uganda plus the brother from South Sudan! This was the very first conference for us to reach fifty attendees—all men! Not that we stop women from coming, but these Ugandans are slowly understanding that we do not believe women pastors are biblical.

The theme for June’s conference was “Biblical Interpretation & Expository Preaching,” but the very first topic of all our confer-

ences is “Knowing the Living God,” where we try to teach about the way God has revealed Himself to mankind in His Word and not what sinful men want to think He is! In this conference we looked at the Sovereignty of God – what it is and what the response of men should be.

The team from Fort Portal brought food (bananas and beans) to help us feed the pastors, and with the increased numbers, that food was a blessing indeed! The English say that “actions speak louder than words.” This is enough of a sign that these Pentecostal pastors have liked the teachings! And on top of their actions, they do speak about it to other pastors themselves. This is what one pastor from Fort Portal was telling other pastors: “I was so confused about the teachings when these conferences started. But later, I came to realize that, though we don’t want to hear some of these teachings, it is the only truth we need because it is found in God’s Word!” In every conference, after teaching who God is according to Scripture, we have heard at least one pastor say, “I didn’t know this

before!” What an encouragement it is for us to hear such words.

A few pastors are showing great interest to learn even more and to see whether they can be used by the Lord to plant biblical churches in their districts and towns in the future. This is making us think about creating some form of a simple, pastoral internship at RBC in the future, if it is at all according to the Lord’s will. And please pray for the connection the Lord is putting between us and the brethren from South Sudan, that something good will come out of it!

With the funds sent to us, we managed to meet all the logistics costs. We also met transport costs to and from Kampala for all the pastors from Fort Portal who have been with us in all our pastors’ conferences since we began. We want to thank Bridgeport Christian Fellowship and Heart-Cry Missionary Society staff and donors for standing behind these conferences financially. We could not manage to do all this without your support. Thank you so much, and may the Lord bless you.” ■







SICILY, ITALY

## MISSIONARY SPOTLIGHT: NAZZARENO ULFO

*Nazzareno (Reno) pastors a church in Caltanissetta, Italy, where he is working to train men to advance church planting and provide leadership for the groups of believers that are forming throughout the region. Brother Reno is also*

*the founder and director of Alfa & Omega—a publishing ministry dedicated to translating and publishing theologically sound resources in Italian. He and his wife Giovanna have three children.*

## TESTIMONY OF CONVERSION

I was born in 1964 to a Roman Catholic family in Messina, a small town located on the northeast coast of Sicily, and grew up in a small village on the north coast of Sicily. I had a happy childhood full of good, formative influences. Religion was part of my life, and I used to attend weekly the Roman Catholic church and partake in the various activities of the parish. I can clearly remember how I felt confessing my sins to the local priest and desiring to live a holy life but realizing that I did not have the

power to obey God's law.

My childish and quite superstitious "faith" was shaken at the age of fourteen when the strength of indwelling sin; the bad example of several priests; and the arguments, criticism, and sarcastic comments against Christianity made by several of my communist friends created the perfect storm for my spiritual shipwreck. Thus, I spent my teen years in open sin and unbelief but experienced from time to time the pains of a guilty conscience.

Things changed quite sudden-

ly early in 1985 when I listened to the testimony of a university friend who was an Evangelical believer (Pentecostal). He was able to explain to me the doctrine of justification by faith alone, through Christ alone, and by grace alone. I had many questions to ask him about God, the church, authority, holiness, the Christian life, etc. He answered them by simply opening the Bible to the right page and letting me find and read the answer myself.

That was powerful!

In March of 1985, I believe that the Lord saved my soul, and my life suddenly changed. I was strengthened by the power of God to live a life of obedience to His holy law even though I knew that my justification was secured by the work of Christ and received by faith alone. I was baptized on June 2, 1985, and joined the local Assemblies of God church in Messina.

## CALL TO MINISTRY

A few months after my conversion, I began to ask myself about God's will for my future. The strong desire to share the gospel of grace motivated me to be involved in every church activity, evangelism, or any other opportunity to serve in the churches. I used all my "free time" studying the Bible and reading every good book that I could find in Italian.

In 1988, I graduated from the university with a degree in Natural Sciences, which allowed me to teach secondary and high school students. After my graduation, I attended a three-year course in theology in Rome at the Assemblies of God (AoG) Bible school. During that time (1990), I married Giovanna; after graduation, in July of 1992, I entered the ministry. I served several AoG churches in the Messina area.

My first years in the pastoral ministry were crucial for a better understanding of the gospel of

grace and of the work of a pastor. Studying the Bible in greater depth and reading Charles Spurgeon, John Owen, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Jonathan Edwards, Reformed systematic theologies, the biographies of George Whitefield and William Carey, and the works of Luther and Calvin all caused a "revolution" in my mind, heart, and practice.

In late 1994, I was asked by the denomination to move to Caltanissetta. In this new environment, I had to face many challenges. There was a lot of work to do. I had the responsibility to preach almost every day (eight times a week), and I taught plainly and openly what I had learned and believed, and I took several steps to implement in the churches my new doctrinal understanding. In 1997, I was elected as an overseer of over three hundred churches in Sicily. I did not hide my belief even among the other



pastors, and the differences of my ministry were noted. Finally, the denomination tried to force me to renounce my beliefs; when I declined, I was cast out with the charge of being a “radical.” The effect was my immediate removal from the pulpit, the loss of my parsonage within ten days, and the loss of salary. It was October of 1998—I was thirty-four, and my two boys were six and three years old.

By the grace of God, I cannot remember a single Lord’s day in which I did not preach the Word, even at that time. In those months, the Lord led us to start a new fellowship in Caltanissetta with some of the former members of the churches I had pastored. The process lasted two years, and we constituted a Reformed Baptist church in November 2000 with the oversight of a Reformed Baptist pastor from America.

## RECENT UPDATE AND MINISTRY OVERVIEW

Dear brothers, may peace and grace be with you all! We gladly express our gratitude to the Lord for His faithful sustaining work of

grace in our midst. We are unworthy of so great a love, but He remains faithful.

## CHURCH MINISTRY AND MEMBERSHIP

On the Lord’s Day mornings, I am expounding the book of Proverbs, treating it topically and trying to address practical subjects that may help people to think and live biblically. The focus is always evangelistic. This past Lord’s Day, I preached from Proverbs 8, a message that could have been titled “The Gospel of Jesus Christ in Proverbs” (His person, His calling, and His power to transform sinners).

A husband and wife, who are already Evangelical believers, are interested and willing to join us. A seventeen-year-old Nigerian refu-

gee, who is looking for a church, also visited us. The past Saturday, we had open air preaching in the center of Caltanissetta. Several people who are regularly attending the church’s meetings came (among them was a man from Egypt and a couple from Calabria), and the Lord gave us grace to sing hymns and to preach a brief message from [John 17:3](#) to about fifteen people of the city who stayed and listened carefully.

At the end of June, two of our members had to relocate to Northern Italy because of their new work. One of them is my son

Giovanni, who moved to the Milan area to work for an oil company.

We are still where we were one year ago with regard to the church building. We are praying for God's

provision to finish the basement, as we would like to start a ministry for boys and girls who abandon school and to provide assistance to poor families in the area.

## CHURCH-PLANTING WORKS

The planting work of new churches in Comiso, Catania, Milazzo, and Palermo continues on a regular basis. From the beginning of July, there have been regular meetings on the Lord's Day in Comiso; the people there have been ministering to the poor of the area, even providing food and clothing.

The group in Catania is meeting in a rented Seventh-day Adventist church building, because the place where they were meeting became too small. The group in Milazzo (about fifty people in

attendance) has reacted well to a recent disappointment caused by a man who used to have a role of teaching there. The Lord gave me grace to deal openly and wisely with the matter. I can say that no one has left the group even if many are still suffering due to what happened. Our brother Francesco Pollicino is doing a very good work in discipling and encouraging these people. Also, things continue to go well in Palermo. My plan is to visit the group next Lord's Day afternoon.

## THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

From July 12-14, I gave three lectures (about five hours) on homiletics to a class of about forty men. My subjects were: "Calvin as an Evangelist," "Evangelistic Puritan Preaching" (J. Al-leine, *A Call to the Unconverted*), and "How to Prepare and Preach

a Series from a NT Book of the Bible" (I Thessalonians). We had to cancel the module in Biblical counseling with Lou Priolo that was supposed to be held in August, and it will soon be rescheduled for 2019.

## PUBLISHING MINISTRY

We had the first meeting of the translators and editors of Alfa & Omega on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. We spent the morning listening to preaching by Johnny Gravino. I also shared something about the history of

the publishing house and about the principles by which we have been operating since the beginning. Afterwards, we discussed several practical editorial issues in order to increase the quality



of our books and to speed up the process of publication. The most recently published books are *The Doctrine of God and Creation* (675 pages) by H. Bavinck and *The New Calvinism Considered* by Jeremy Walker. We are

presently working on a couple of John MacArthur commentaries, a book on prayer (*The Hidden Life of Prayer* by D. McIntyre), and a new Italian edition of *Death in the City* by F. Schaeffer.

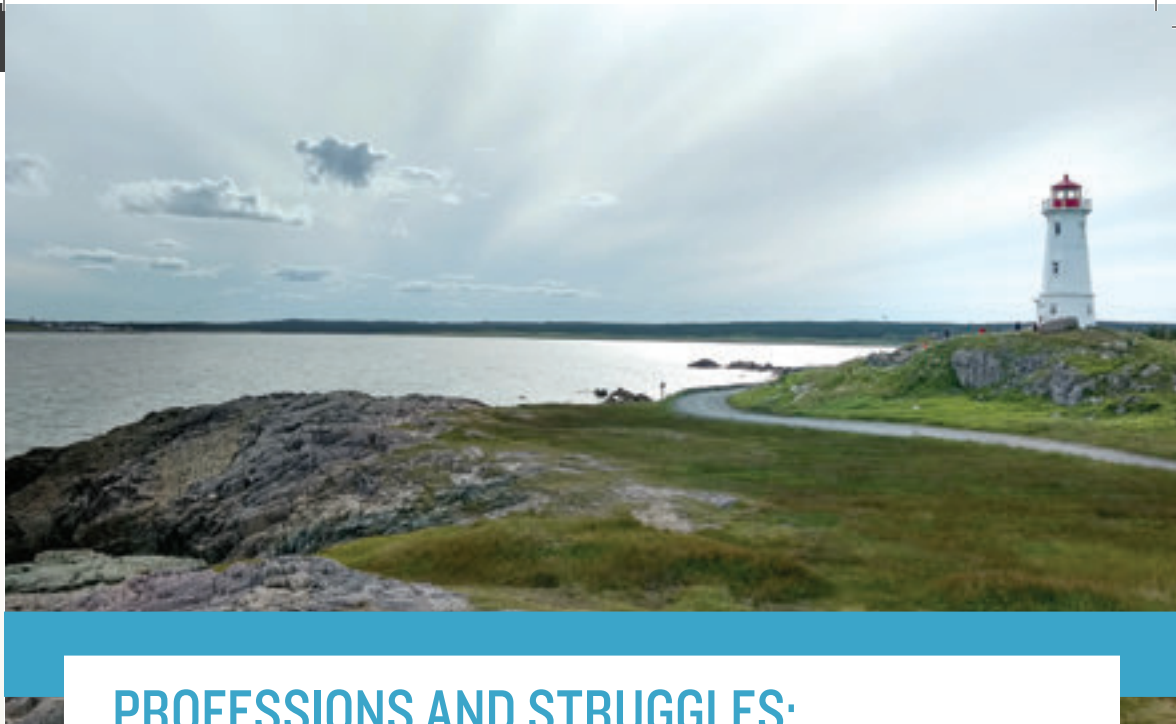
## PRAYER REQUESTS

Please continue to pray for us:

- ▶ For our relationship with God, that the preaching of the Word might contribute to the spiritual growth of believers and to the salvation of the unconverted.
- ▶ For some believers who are rather “lethargic” or little involved in worship, so that the climate of our adoration might always be one of joyful freshness and full-hearted involvement.
- ▶ For the men involved in the church-planting works: Giuseppe, Francesco, Jose, and Ivan, all of whom are helping in the teaching ministry.
- ▶ That the Lord might grant other elders for our church.
- ▶ That the Lord might call other sinners to faith and repentance.
- ▶ That the Lord might provide the necessary funds to complete the building.
- ▶ For Alfa & Omega Publishing Ministry.
- ▶ For the various activities of training, evangelization, and conferences.



Chiesa Cristiana  
Evangelica Sola Grazia



## PROFESSIONS AND STRUGGLES: UPDATES FROM CANADA

*Below are recent reports from the three Canadian missionaries highlighted in HeartCry Magazine Issue 91. Please continue to keep these men, their families, and their ministries in your prayers.*

### CHRISTOPHER SIPPLEY

We are grateful for the love and care that you tangibly express through your partnership with us in this ministry. Your prayers and support are invaluable gifts. Thank you.

The summer months have been a wonderful blessing. The days have been warm and bright. We have enjoyed several encouraging visits from friends and family, including one from my sister and four of her children. She and her husband live in Ohio; they have six children, three of whom are adopted. Two were rescued as infants from a very bad situation. I cannot help but see in this

a picture of God's redeeming grace, as they are now in a loving Christian home.

Another picture of God's redeeming grace that took place this summer was the recent baptism of three people. Each of them has been attending the church for well over a year. They desired to publicly profess their faith in Christ through baptism. One of those baptized was a young man who had been walking through a difficult time in the loss of his mother. It was a friend from work who invited him to the church. The gospel was clearly explained to him on several occasions. He then expressed his desire to follow Jesus. He said



that coming to this church literally saved his life, and he told me that he has now found a new family. His baptism was a great joy in my heart. One of the others who were baptized that day was a neighbor of ours whom we met and with whom shared the gospel not long after we moved into our home. She started attending the church a few months later, desiring to know more. After several weeks of sitting under the preaching of His Word, she was hopeful of eternal life. Soon after, she too faced a great tragedy in her family: her youngest son took his own life. I can only imagine the pain she felt! I praise the Lord that this trial in her young Christian life only made her cling more closely to Christ and His Word. Her baptism was a testimony of God's sustaining grace.

## ROB GREENWOOD

Thank you very much for all your support financially and for your prayers for each one of us.

Since the last report, we have had some personal struggles. One of these hardships that we faced this past week was news that we received from our doctor. He told us that the child my wife was carrying was a non-viable fetus, which means my wife will soon have a miscarriage. This was hard news for us to hear,

One more blessing this summer took place at the annual scallop festival. For the third year in a row, the church set up a table with Bibles, tracts, evangelistic DVDs, and church invitations. For three days, church members took turns at the table engaging people in conversation and distributing these materials. This is the busiest local outdoor event of the year and a good opportunity for us as a church to reach out to our community. We have already seen fruit from our efforts. An older man with whom we spoke at the table attended a service this past Sunday morning with a friend. They said that they would be back.

We rejoice in God's steadfast love and redeeming grace! Please continue to pray for us.

but we have committed it to the hands of our Lord, and we trust in Him in this time of difficulty. Even during this trial, my wife has been encouraged by many of the women from our church. Upon hearing the news, they have been texting her, and many have visited her. We praise the Lord for His body in times like this.

Thank you very much for your prayers.

## COREY BETTS

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, according to the work He is accomplishing in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.

In the warmer months here in Fredericton, people are very active and rarely home. For that reason, I often go and evangelize on the streets or parks, just handing out tracts and praying that the Lord would open a door. Many times, the moment I began to talk about Jesus, people would beg with me to stop. It reminded me of Matthew 8, when Jesus went to the Gadarenes. After sending the demons into the pigs, it says the village came out and begged him to depart from them. There is a serious hardness to the gospel in this city, not unlike many other places in the world. The respect for religion that once existed in this region has evaporated almost entirely. Please pray that God would have mercy on this city.

I do rejoice in the Lord's mercy and the fact that there have been four professions of faith in the last month. One was a young man who, through a difficult trial in his life, was brought very low. The Lord used preaching to convict him of his sin and reveal to him that his previous "conversion" may have been spurious. An elderly man whom I visited with another elder made the sec-

ond profession. He is consistently turning from the sin in his life. Please pray for him. Pray that God would protect him from his neighbor who has been known to be physically violent with him.

The other two professions were made by two young men from a new family that just began attending in May. I have been praying for the older of the two for almost two years. Our first meeting was heartbreaking. I pleaded with him to come to Christ, but he refused. He said he loved his sin more and that he supposed it was his lot to be condemned. He knew what was right, but he could not bring himself to do it. I left his apartment that night very sad. I have now had the privilege of harvesting what many have planted and watered over the years. Actually, he had stopped by the Christian camp where his brother was working, and during staff training he heard some testimonies and also watched Paul Washer's so-called "Shocking Youth Message." This led to his profession of faith! Pray that he would be held fast and that his profession would prove real! ■



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# GO OR SEND



"The world lives in a time of crisis. Christians alone are in a position to rescue the perishing. We dare not settle down to try to live as if things were normal." – A. W. Tozer

"If by excessive labor, we die before reaching the average age of man, worn out in the Master's service, then glory be to God, we shall have so much less of earth and so much more of Heaven!" – C. H. Spurgeon

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