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Vol. 18, Issue No. 8 | 2023 August | Hebron, Kumbanad, Kerala | www.revivemegod.org



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POWER AND GRACE AMIDST **PERSECUTION**

ACTS 4



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President
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A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO PERSECUTION

What is the Christian response to persecution?

This question has great importance for us today. In the past few years and especially since the new government, India's Christian community has experienced more and more persecution than any other time since independence 1947.

Increasingly, we hear stories of Christians beaten, raped, and killed. Militants burn churches, raid prayer meetings, and destroy Bibles. Even in the state of Kerala where Christians comprise 20% of the population, Hindu radicals attack Christians in a kind of "ethnic cleansing". Propaganda machines foment hatred, accusing Christians of "lies", "destroying civilization" and following a man (Jesus Christ) who "is a dark force risen from the lowest depths of human nature."

In the meantime, the police watch, do nothing, and even join the hatemongers. State and central governments often offer no help and make no statements to calm hatred and restore order.

As followers of Jesus Christ, how are we to regard all of this? I believe we should look to the Bible, to the writings of a man who both persecuted and endured great persecution. I speak of the Apostle Paul. He writes to the Thessalonians, who suffered Persecution because of their faith:

"Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of You among the churches of God for Your Perseverance and faith in the midst of all your Persecutions and afflictions which You endure. This is a Plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering."

Note that Paul commends the Thessalonians in their sufferings. They have been tested in the fire for their

faith. The sense of Paul's words is that all who love the Lord will experience this testing. Scars of affliction are the hallmark of our humanity as Christians on this earth. Affliction is a result of our weakness and the uncertainty of life in a world not fully surrendered to God.

In a sinful world, People defy their Creator. They worship other gods and give themselves to godless Passions. Persecution is what rebels do to those who give up their rebellion against God.

The Thessalonians were only one group of people to whom Paul ministered. At different times, with Silas and Timothy, Paul shared the gospel with Jews and Greeks. Wherever they went, large numbers turned from idols to serve the true and living God.

But everywhere, they faced fierce opposition. Why should this happen? They did not Plot to overthrow the Roman government. They did not incite civil disobedience or rebellion against any authorities. They only became excited over their new relationship with God. They had discovered His holiness, His Presence and His power. They had experienced His glory. They saw their Passions and desires change. They found the truth, and now they wanted to share it with neighbors, friends, and the whole world. They had only one Problem.

Their changed lives through Christ only revealed that others lived in error. This made others furious. What had believers done to offend? Nothing. It was the nature of Christianity that offended. The holiness of God had "rubbed off" onto them, and the rebels couldn't stand it. They did only what rebels do: they struck back. If they could not strike God, they would at least strike His children. Persecution became a sign that God was at work.

Persecution has always been the lot of God's People. Daniel the prophet faced Persecution because he took a stand to worship the true God. He believed God would be faithful to him, and he did not worry what would happen.

As a Young man, the Babylonians took him and his friends captives. They lost everything dear to them, including their names. But God blessed Daniel and gave him favor with his captors, so that the king even wanted to make him a ruler in his kingdom. This aroused the anger and jealousy of others who knew that this was the direct result of his relationship with God. They tried to destroy his relationship with God, and when that failed, they tried to destroy him.

Daniel was a Pilgrim and a stranger in a strange land. In a way, so are we. Though

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Vol. 18 | Issue 8 2023 August

A magazine that will enrich and renew your spiritual life and give Christian perspective on current events.

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KUMBANAD, PATHANAMTHITTA,
KERALA - 689 547

DESIGN

Beam Design S2dio
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Cover & other photos courtesy: Google

POSTAL ADDRESS

P.O. BOX. 31, HEBRON, KUMBANAD
KERALA, INDIA, PIN - 689 547
Phone: 0469 - 2664075, 2665855
Mobile: 94476 08954

The views and ideas expressed in each article are those of the writer. - Editor

JUST ONE MINUTE *Continued from Page 2*

Christians have been in India for more than 2,000 years, we are now told by some that we are not citizens in our own homeland. But let us not feel sorry for ourselves. In us, these people only see the work of God with whom they cannot or will not reconcile.

Persecution cost Stephen his life, but it also helped to spread the church far and wide - and even converted the man who over saw his execution. Even as his persecutors stoned him to death, Stephen saw a vision of Jesus Christ so powerful and glorious, that even his terrible suffering could not keep him from rejoicing than pitying his killers and pleading to God for their forgiveness. Stephen's experience reminds us that during our greatest trial, Christ will also give us a vision to help us bear our sufferings. Even if persecution leads to death, we will know not humiliating death but comfort, glorious reward, and spread of the gospel.

These examples of faithful men means to each of us that if we love Jesus Christ and live lives of faith, we WILL face persecution as certain as the sun rises and sets. But persecution only means that our lives reveal God's life in us to others. When we stand for a righteous cause as did these men Daniel and Stephen, God enables us to transcend the fear of death. We may not find deliverance in this life, but we shall find deliverance in the next.

Because we bear His Spirit, we have eternal life. Persecution cannot destroy eternal life in Christ's church, cannot undo our relationship with God. Nothing can destroy Christ's church, including the worst that man can bring against it.

Indeed, persecution will do just the opposite. In our weakness, we will discover His strength. In our weakness, we will discover a new love for Him and for one another. In our weakness, we will see God work in great and marvelous ways beyond our expectation. In our weakness, God always makes new hearers for the gospel. That is why persecution has never destroyed the church.

A more modern victim of persecution was John Wesley, the English preacher. Wherever he went, he preached the gospel, and he became a daily target of rocks, eggs and tomatoes. But John Wesley so understood the connection between effective evangelism and persecution that he expected nothing less than abuse. In fact, when two or three days passed without an egg or insult thrown at him, he even feared that he was in sin, failing to reflect the life of Christ to others!

In spite of persecution, Wesley's faithful evangelism brought stunning revival to Christ's church in England and a massive harvest of souls, even among his persecutors, that changed English society for generations.

As India's Christians face persecution today, let us draw courage from those who have gone before us. We face hard times, but also the greatest opportunity that India has ever had to see the glory of Christ. Let us not seek persecution, but if it comes, let us bear it in His grace and victory.

As the old proverb says, "Whatever goes through the fire cannot be overcome by the heat of the sun." ●



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Pastor Dr. John K. Mathew

PERSECUTED BUT NOT CAST DOWN

Jesus never said his work was safe. Whether it is risking our reputation, or risking our life, serving the gospel requires courage.

Jeopardizing the liberties of others has become a norm in our society today. Some people in our community find pleasure in assaulting others.

At the national level the entanglement of religion and ethnicity triggered riots in Manipur. The violence that erupted between the Meiteis and Kukis has caused the nation of India to weep and hang her head in shame.

Obviously, it raises questions about the integrity of our government and the value Indians give to freedom, democracy and secularism. Also it poses serious questions about our five thousand year old culture and civilization.

There are so many brutal attacks against Christians happening every day in different parts of the country. Unfortunately no one pays any attention. But one thing is true that Christianity has the power to face this and Christians are fully aware about it. Apostle Peter writes, "*Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in as much as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed... How ever, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name*" (1Pet.4:12-16) Here arises the question, who is a Christian?

An answer is easily found in a letter an anonymous writer wrote to a friend, which dates back to the first century. The writer describes a strange people who are

in the world but not of the world: Christians are not differentiated from other people by country, language, or customs; you see, they do not live in cities of their own, or speak some strange dialect...They live in both Greek and foreign cities, wherever chance has put them. They follow local customs in clothing, food, and other aspects of life. But at the same time, they demonstrate to us the unusual form of their citizenship.

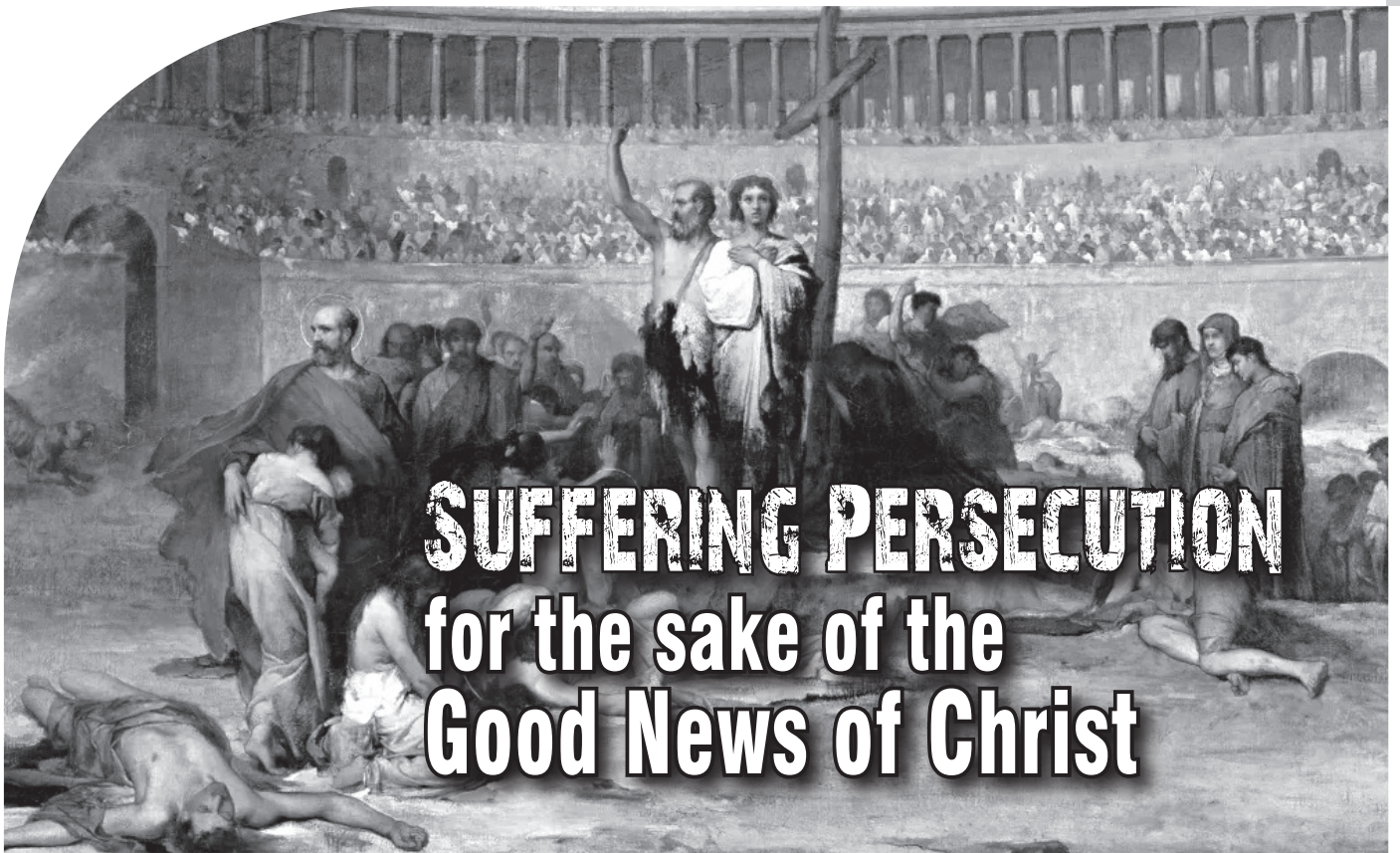
They live in their own native lands, but as aliens... every foreign country is to them as their native country, and every native land as a foreign country.

They marry and have children just like everyone else, but they do not kill unwanted children. They offer a shared table, but not a shared bed. They are passing their days on earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the appointed laws and go beyond the laws in their own lives.

They love everyone, but are persecuted by all. They are put to death and gain life. They are poor and yet make many rich. They are dishonored and yet gain glory through dishonor.

Their names are blackened, and yet they are cleared. They are mocked and bless in return. They are treated outrageously and behave respectfully to others.

When they do good, they are punished as evildoers. When punished, they rejoice as if being given new life. They are attacked by Jews as aliens and are persecuted by Greeks; yet those who persecute them cannot give any reason for their hostility. It is true everywhere and we need to rejoice in as much as we participate in the sufferings of Christ.



SUFFERING PERSECUTION for the sake of the Good News of Christ



DR. DOMENIC MARBANIANG

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The timid disciples of Jesus found strength and hope when they saw Jesus after His resurrection. His glorious ascension and the message of the angels that He will return in the same manner should have removed all fear from their hearts. Then came Pentecost and the great outpouring of the Spirit that unleashed a remarkable breakthrough adding about three thousand people to the Church on a single day! The growth continued unhindered as more people continued to be saved and added to their number. Then, the second great event happened when a man who was lame from birth was healed in the temple premises through the ministry of Peter and John. Many more believed and were saved on that day. However, this also led to the first Christian experience of religious persecution that we read about in Acts 4.

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. (Acts 4:1-3)

The Sadducees disbelieved in and disliked the doctrine of resurrection. They neither believed in angels, nor spirits, nor in the resurrection (Acts 23:8). They also did not believe the prophetic writings to be Scripture and only held on to the first five books of Moses as the authoritative word of God. But they were men of political influence and controlled the temple ministry. During Jesus' trial, Caiaphas the high priest, a Sadducee, tore his clothes when Jesus declared that He was the Messiah and that they will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven (Matt.26:64). This apocalyptic vision of the prophets was unacceptable to the Sadducees. Now,



Jesus' disciples were preaching the same thing that these leaders crucified Jesus for; in fact, they preached not merely the crucified Lord but the risen Savior. The defense of the apostles against the allegations is exemplary.

Unashamed of the Name

Quite a big crowd of rulers, teachers, elders, and priests gathered the next day to interrogate the apostles. Their one question was "By what power or what name did you do this?" (Acts 4:7).

These were the same leaders that questioned the authority and power of Jesus (Matt.12:24-26; Mark 11:28-30) were asking of His disciples the source of their power and authority. A succinct answer to this question could simply have been, "By the power of the Holy Spirit and the name of Jesus Christ." However, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, took this opportunity to share the Good News.

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.

"Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:8-12)

Peter's first response contains a clear restatement of the question, a simple answer, a bold confession, and a gigantic declaration. We begin to see a Peter who is unafraid of the stormy winds and the rising



waves but rushes into it with a sincere boldness of faith in His Master. Certainly, the rulers and the priests did have the right to make this query as required by Deuteronomy 13:1-5

If a prophet...appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, "Let us follow other gods"... "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer....

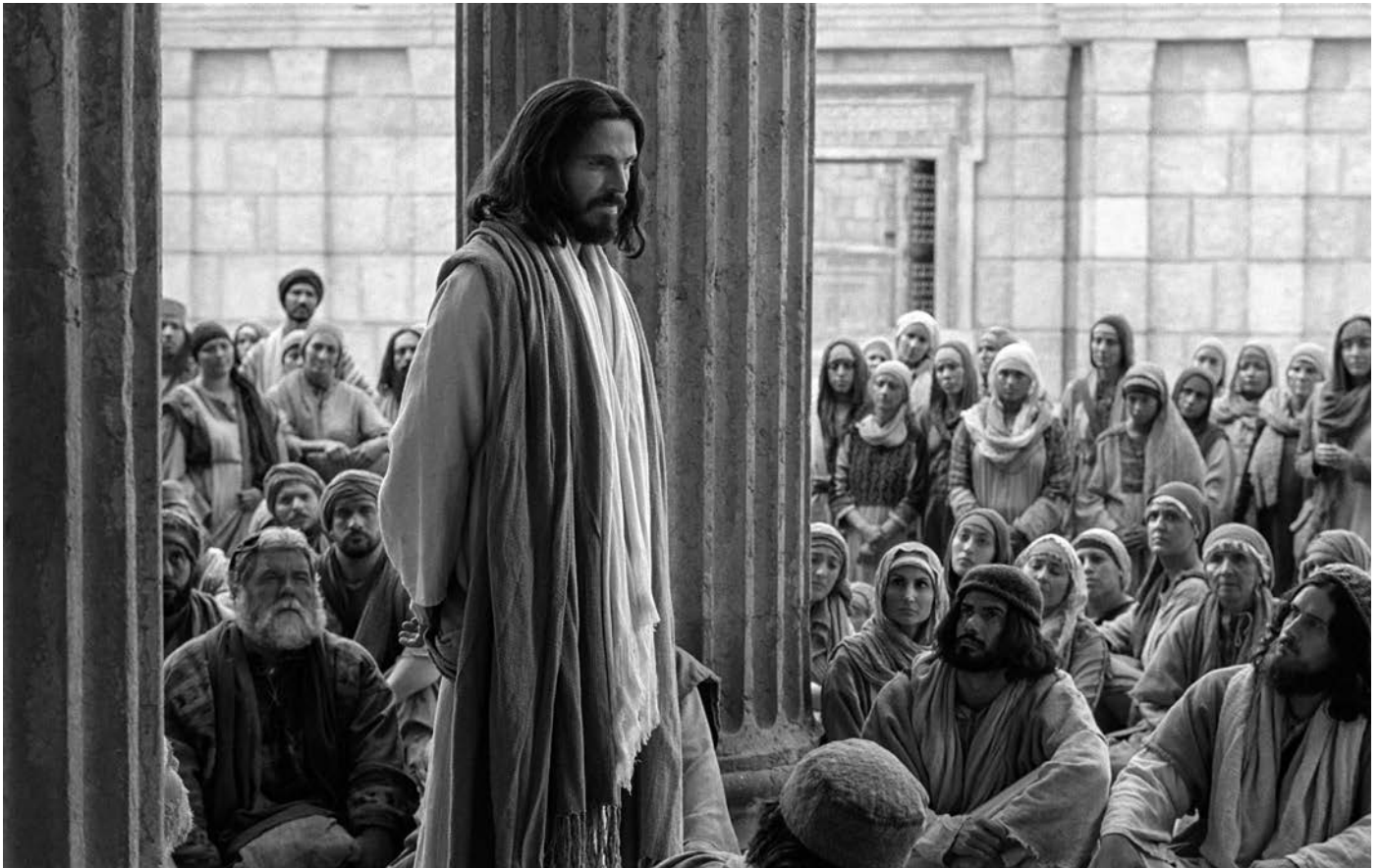
The Jewish Talmudic writings give precedence to the king over the high priest, and to the high priest over the prophet (See Jerusalem Talmud Horayot 3:5:6). In fact, they regard a scholar as more important and credible than a sign and wonder performing prophet

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(Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 1:4:3). It should not, therefore, be surprising that the Jewish rulers took neither Jesus' nor His disciples' miracles seriously. Unlike the common populace, they were more interested in their message and understanding of the Law than in their miracles and treated signs and wonders as subservient to the Law. Both Jesus and the disciples did fully and adequately provide answers to the issues raised by these legal experts, scholars, and rulers of the day. However, this does not mean that Jesus and His disciples regarded miracles as unimportant and ignorable. Their ministry is evidence of the same.

Peter ties both physical healing and spiritual healing under the word "salvation". The fact that this lame man was healed by the name of Jesus also means that there is salvation only in the name of Jesus, and in none other.



Both the Sadducees and Pharisees were more concerned about legal justification than prophetic justification of a miracle. But, unlike the Sadducees who questioned the authority of Jesus and some Pharisees who demonized Jesus for healing on the sabbath (John 9:16; Matt.12:24), Nicodemus, who was also a Pharisee, knew that nobody could perform the kind of miracles that Jesus performed unless God was with that person (John 3:2). So did other Pharisees who rhetorically asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" (John 9:16).

Jesus called the opposing leaders "brood of vipers," hypocrites who appeared to be externally righteous but were internally debauched, and who were guilty of murdering the prophets (Matt.23:27-37).

To such a crowd did Peter proclaim Jesus, the One they crucified, as the Savior of the world. He boldly told them on their face that they were

Jesus had very clearly warned His disciples: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first... If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:18,20). Contrary to the Jewish self-conceited disregard of the miracles, both Christ's miraculous word and His miraculous works had an enormous testimonial significance in the eyes of God:

guilty of rejecting the Messiah and crucifying Him. He boldly proclaimed Jesus as sent by God, rejected by men, raised up from the dead, and lifted up above all names, the Name above all names, before whom all knees shall bow (Phil.2:9-11).

Word vs World

At the root of persecution lies denial, rejection, and a sense of threat. The Jewish religious leaders not only denied Jesus' authority and rejected Him but felt threatened by His work and teaching. Regarding Jesus, they said, "If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" (John 11:48). So they decided to kill Him. Now, regarding

the disciples of Jesus, they said "But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name" (Acts 4:17). So, they called them and warned them.

However, Peter and John boldly replied that it was right in God's sight to obey God rather than these people and that they could not but speak about what they had seen and heard (Acts 4:19,20). But, why were the hearts of these religious leaders so hardened against God?

It is obvious that they had no fear of God in their hearts. They feared people (Mark 12:12; Acts 4:21). They loved themselves and sought the honor of men (John 5:41-44). Probably, they were more afraid of losing their position or of being punished by the Romans (John 11:48). The fact was that they had neither the fear of God nor faith in God. Here, they were threatening the disciples, but at the same time were also careful to not displease the people who were already praising God for this miracle of healing. These religious leaders who were occupying the sacred temple's high positions were actually very materialistic, secular, and worldly. They represented the world, not God. They were the "princes of this world" who "crucified the Lord of glory" (1Cor.2:8); while ironically seeking for themselves a false glory of this world.

Jesus had very clearly warned His disciples: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first....If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John

15:18,20). Contrary to the Jewish self-conceited disregard of the miracles, both Christ's miraculous word and His miraculous works had an enormous testimonial significance in the eyes of God:

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin." (John 5:22)

"If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father." (John 5:24).

The fact that they saw the miracles and yet hated both Jesus and the Father left them defenseless. It would, therefore, be senseless for Christ's disciples to bend down to the wish and will of such hardened and condemned humans. They would rather obey God than men.

The first Christians embraced the word and rejected the world. This was reflected not only in their prayer, but also in their ministry, and their lifestyle. Acts 4:24-35 tells us about their manner of living. They prayed not for God to take away the persecution but for power to speak God's "word with great boldness," and for God to stretch out His hand to "heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders" in the name of Jesus even as they boldly testified with all grace. It also tells us that they had all things in common and were a sharing community that fulfilled Christ's commandment of love:

"This is my command: Love each other. If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first." (John 15:17,18)

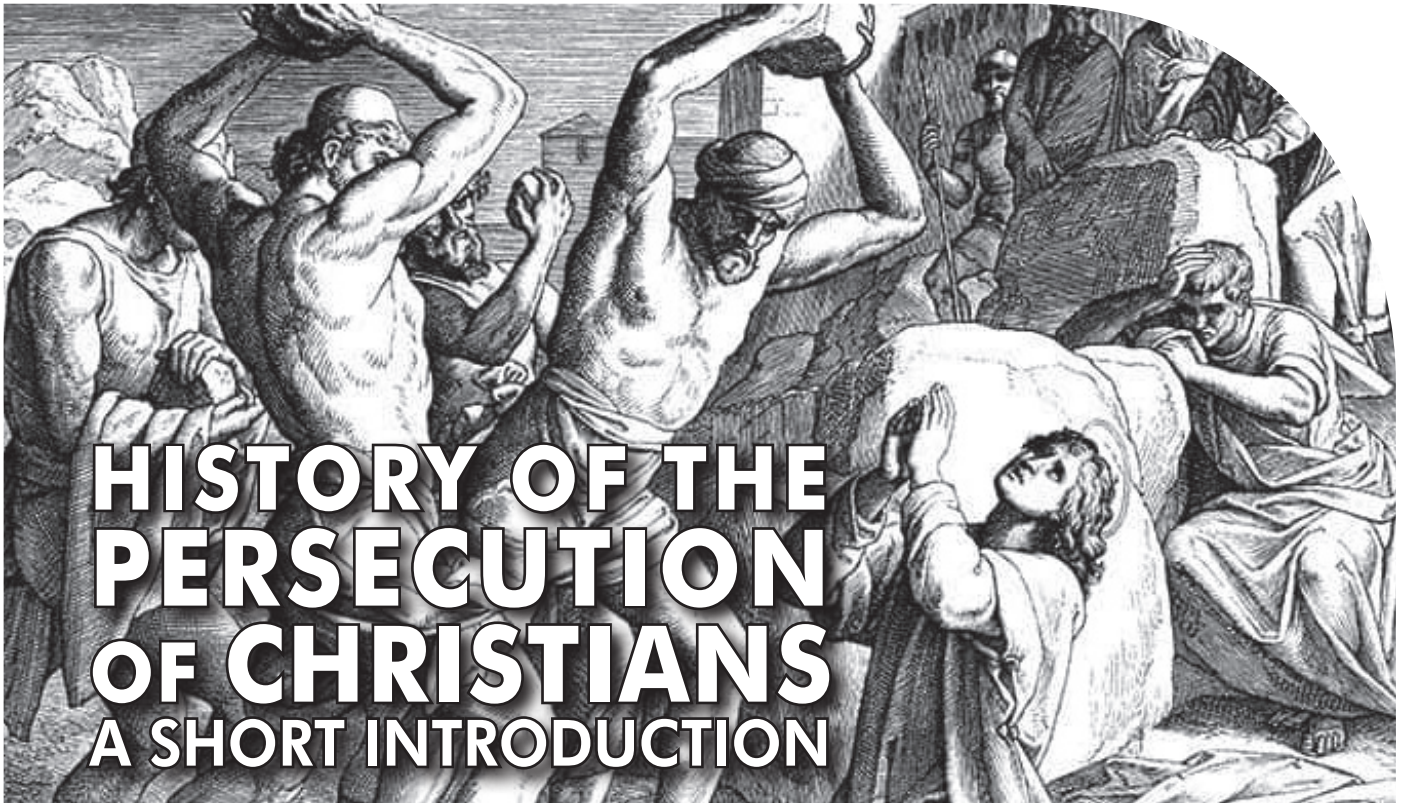
The world is divided into those who love Jesus and receive Him and those who hate Him and reject Him; those who love Him also love each other contrary to the world that hates them all (John 13:35; 1John 2:9-11). A congregation that is divided and filled

with wranglings and disputes fails to stand as a beacon of God's truth and has forgotten her upward calling in Christ (1Cor.6:7; 1Pet.3:9); but a loving and caring community demonstrates a living faith in Christ (James 2:14-17).

Conclusion

Jesus warned that suffering is natural for the righteous. Jesus did not promise a no-trouble life; in fact, He said that in this world we will have tribulation, but there is hope because Jesus has overcome the world (John 16:33). "In fact," Paul told Timothy "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2Tim.3:12). The only way to escape trouble is by casting away one's cross, forsaking the word and the work of Christ, and returning to some comfort zone in the world (Matt.13:20-22; 2Tim.4:10). But there is true peace and comfort only in Christ (John 16:33); He gives us His peace not as the world gives, because He wants us to be fearless and hopeful (John 14:27).

In times of trials, this may look easier said than done. But, may the example of our Lord Jesus and of the apostles remind us and strengthen our hearts so that we can focus on the truth of God, our victory in Christ, and our eternal inheritance in God's kingdom. In times of trials, may our hearts learn to pray like the disciples did, love like the disciples did, and testify to Christ's resurrection as the disciples did. And, may the Lord stretch out His hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of His holy servant Jesus! (Acts 4:30). ●



HISTORY OF THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

A SHORT INTRODUCTION



DR. RAJEEVAN M. THOMAS

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1. Introduction

The Christian Church is the socio-religious organization of Christians. Nevertheless, the nature and functions of the Church are complex and compound. It is a divine-human institution on earth, existing and functioning both visibly and invisibly on the local and universal scale, and covers numerous programs and processes. The important task of the Church is mission, which is comprehensive in itself. Every church must be a missionary church. The mission model of the Apostolic Church is a classic model for all churches, past, present and future. Engaging in Christian mission in a national context is quite challenging and sacrificial, particularly in a religiously pluralistic nation like India. One of the important challenges is the persecution of missionaries. The highest cost of persecution is the martyrdom of missionaries. As Tertullian, the early Christian apologist and writer states, "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church." Though persecution is initially a painful and life-consuming challenge, it is ultimately a possibility and promise for mission and church growth. Let us examine this fact by doing a swift and brief journey through the pages of the history of Christianity.

2. Meaning and Interpretations of Religious(Christian)Persecution

The word religious persecution is an acquainted word to all, particularly to Christians in a multicultural context. Religious, political, or ethnic differences and conflicts bring persecution. Defining or interpreting the term/process of persecution in one sentence is very difficult. However, let me make an attempt. Religious (Christian) persecution can be defined as *the mental, physical, racial or similar threats and atrocities against the followers of one religion (probably new, mission-*



ary, minor or non-dominant religious group/s) by a major religious group/s (politically, demographically or ethnically powerful), either through words or actions with or without political power or State approval, on the grounds of their differences of faith and praxis(culture), as well as the fear or jealous of the dominant over the subordinate.

Similarly, persecutions may be interpreted further as follows:

- i. Persecution is the denial of the fundamental needs and rights (religious/spiritual) of a person.
- ii. Persecution is the denial of the personal freedom and security of a person.
- iii. Persecution is a human rights violation of a citizen.
- iv. Persecution is a voluntary choice of the adherents of a

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The history of persecution of Christians is vast and varied. Whenever we study the history of persecution, we would inadvertently veer towards the Roman Empire. Jews were the pioneers in the persecution of Christians.
 ”

religion (Ceasar or Christ?).

- v. Persecution is an encounter of polytheism and monotheism.
- vi. Persecution is an encounter of exclusivism and inclusivism (claims).
- vii. Persecution is a clash between the majority and minority religions.
- viii. Persecution is an undesired outcome of mass conversion of one religion to other.
- ix. Persecution is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus.
- x. Persecution is a prime factor in the growth of Christian discipleship and the Church.
- xi. Persecution is the purification process of the Church from worldliness into Godliness.

3. Biblical Basis

Persecution is not an accident or an unexpected event, but is foretold in the Bible, particularly in the prophetic teachings of Jesus. First of all, Jesus taught us to pray for the people who persecute you. (Matt.5:44) He also said that all these persecutions are mainly due to His name, and affirms that those who undergo it are blessed ones (Matt.5:11). He also comforts the victims of persecutions with the announcement of rewards in heaven. Therefore, all are advised to endure or respond to it with rejoicing and gladness (Matt.5:10-12). Jesus also foretold the persecution of both ministers/ clergy and believers, the methods of persecution like arresting, prosecutions before religious and political authority, jailing, and even their martyrdoms (Lk. 11:49; 21:12). Above all, Jesus also predicted His persecution in His public ministry that "...If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:19-21). Therefore, the persecution of Christians has a strong scriptural basis.



4. History of Persecutors of Christians in Early Church

The history of persecution of Christians is vast and varied. Whenever we study the history of persecution, we would inadvertently veer towards the Roman Empire. Jews were the pioneers in the persecution of Christians. They began by crucifying Jesus, stoning, arresting, jailing and killing the apostles and their followers as seen in the Gospels' passion narratives and the Book of Acts. Later, it was continued by the Non-Jewish /gentiles. Probably the biggest persecution of Christians ever recorded in history was in the Roman Empire, which encompassed the geographical areas of three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. The first three centuries of the Christian era were notorious for the severe persecution of Christians under ten Roman Emperors from Nero (AD64-68) to Galerian (AD311-312). The persecution came to an end in AD 313 with the great toleration edict, named Edict of Milan, issued by the

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Roman Emperor Constantine. History of the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire has been divided into two main periods: the period of local persecution (AD64-249) and general (Empire wide) persecution (AD250-312).

One of the significant paradoxes to note is that as persecution in the West (Roman Empire) began to cessate, it began to increase in the East. The severe persecution of Christians in Persia during the early decades of the 4th century particularly under Shapur-II is notorious in the Eastern World. In order to escape from persecution, few Christians even migrated to India. Nevertheless, it is momentous to note that Indian subcontinent did not produce brutal persecutors like Nero, Diocletian, Shapur-II and the like. The number of martyrs in India is comparatively

very less. The martyrdom of St. Thomas, Devasahayam Pilla, Graham Staines and others are the more well known. The small or big persecutions of Christians in various states of India, particularly in Orissa (Kandhamal), Manipur (?) and so on are significant recent episodes. Down through the centuries till today or even unto the last day of Christian mission, persecution would follow the Church.

5. Causes

Why do persecutions happen? Who is responsible? Is it the non-Christians alone or are Christians equally culpable? Persecution is the natural outcome of direct and indirect causative factors. All religious persecutions emerge out of the acceptance of a new faith or rejection of the old faith. Some causative factors for the persecution of Christians in the early centuries of Christianity can be enumerated as follows:

- i. Christianity was considered as an illegal religion in the Roman Empire on the grounds of violation of the existing law that no one is expected to start a new religion. Christianity has emerged as a new religion and thus became illicit.
- ii. Christianity became a rival to the Emperor Worship (the State Religion of the Roman Empire), due to its exclusivist claims regarding the salvation of humanity (Acts 4:22), and preaching against idol worship and polytheism.
- iii. Mass conversions to the Christian faith and the drop in number of the

people following other faiths. The economic depression of the artisans who makes the idols and pagan priests due to the teachings of apostles.

- iv. The destruction of social order by the egalitarian approach in inducting all sorts of people including slaves to Christianity with freedom and equality. Christians are alleged to be anti-social due to their absence from social gatherings, festivals and sacrifices.
- v. Misinterpretation of the unwillingness of Christians to serve in the military and participate in national political programs, as anti-national, anti-patriotic and disloyal to the Roman Emperor/Empire.
- vi. Christians are alleged as immoral people on the ground of secret prayers and gatherings in private houses at night.
- vii. Christians are suspected to be atheists because of the lack of idols, temples, sacrifices, etc.
- viii. Christians are alleged as the causative factors of natural calamities due to the attraction of anger of gods and goddesses.
- ix. Christians are suspected of spying and even attempting rebellion and treason against Roman power.
- x. Christians are alleged to be cannibals on the ground of the misinterpretation of the comments of the Lord's Supper ("This my body, eat it this is my blood and drink it...").

The causes and results of persecution of Christians are common to all nations.

6. Results

We need to ask a few basic questions, before thinking about the impact of persecution. Was persecution a blessing or curse to Christianity? Whether

persecutions caused the growth or decline of the Christian church? The genuine answer is certainly both! Positively, it effected the growth of churches. Witnessing the heroic faith and courage of pious Christians to face persecution largely attracted people to the Christian faith. It proved that Christianity cannot be rooted out with persecution. It also contributed to the origin and development of the monastic movement in the Christian church. It produced great motivation and encouragement as well as role models to the later generation to face challenges. Similarly, it acted as a 'purifying fire' in the Christian church by avoiding nominal Christians.

Nevertheless, it also produced negative results too, primarily in the form of many martyrs. Persecutions are enriched with both natural martyrs and self-imposed martyrs due to their deliberate choice or wilful decision. It led to the evolution of heretical teachings inside the churches due to the martyrdom of apostles and their followers. The history of persecution in the Roman and Persian Empire or elsewhere, including India, shows that Christianity cannot be destroyed by persecutions.

7. Concluding Remarks

The history of Christianity is also the history of persecution. Persecution is a 'necessary painful evil' to keep up the Christian churches as growing in holiness and mission. The history of Christianity from the past to the present shows that persecution is an integral part of Christian mission and one of the vital and painful factors of church growth. Can we avoid or eradicate persecution completely? Do we need to pray for avoiding persecution? From the survey of Scripture as well from historical tradition, it is apparent that we cannot avoid persecution wholesale. Nevertheless, we can reduce the intensity of persecution by

avoiding unnecessary mistakes and also by taking few precautionary steps as follows:

- i. Avoid exclusivist and provocative public statements.
- ii. Develop public apologetics engagements to face allegations.
- iii. Never work for conversion but transformation of the people with Gospel.
- iv. Convince people that voluntary change of faith is not the change of nationality.
- v. Never criticize other religions or even churches but love and respect all.
- vi. Overcome the challenges of persecution with Christian basic values like love, forgiveness, toleration, prayer, etc.

- vii. Prove that Christianity is not a mere religion but a spiritual way of life.
- viii. Try optimum indigenization for making Christianity relevant to the given context.
- ix. Maximum co-operation with government and NGOs in developing national programs, and work for the strengthening of democracy, secularism.
- x. Develop patriotism, nationalism and work for the progress of the church and society with a goal of holistic development.
- xi. After every event of persecution, we must re-examine that how far we Christians are responsible for the manifestation of persecution and needs to do its needful and relevant rectifications without violating the scriptural foundations.

The words, deeds and attitude of Jesus and the apostles towards persecutors is the eternal model to all who are undergoing persecutions. Persecution is part of true Christian discipleship. God is watching the persecutors and persecuted people. Let us pray to keep us in the very center of God's Will in all times including the time of persecutions. Let us pray for the persecutors and their victims. ●



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PRAYER as a WEAPON against PERSECUTION



Lt. Col. V. I. LUKE (Retd.)

Vice -President (Development)
India Bible College and Seminary
Kumbanad

In this day and age, we have been listening, reading and viewing several messages online and in physical meetings **about prayer**. But very few children of God have practically discovered the value of **Prayer as a Spiritual Weapon** in our hands.

Right from the time when a soldier is inducted into the Army, he is taught to guard with his life the personal weapon issued to him for his safe custody. The sanctity of any weapon, known as a "controlled store", that is issued to any soldier is to be taken very seriously. A cadet under training is taught to clean and maintain his weapon and ensure its safety until it is returned to the armoury for safe custody.

I recall a very serious incident that took place in a battalion while posted in Bikaner, Rajasthan. One soldier had lost his rifle issued to him while the battalion had gone for a three-month long training and exercise in the deserts. When the battalion had proceeded on a night long exercise, one soldier from a Company fell asleep in the middle of the pitch-dark night when they were given an official rest in between a long and tiring march. When the company was ordered to re-start with the night long march, Sepoy 'X' altogether forgot about his weapon when he awoke from his sleep. The matter was treated as very serious. To cut a long story short, the entire company was alerted and literally the whole battalion went into a search mode. His immediate seniors including his Company commander were all hauled up by the Battalion Commander. It took the entire battalion almost two days and two nights before the weapon was traced in the wide and open desert, which put everyone in distress! It was like searching for a needle in a haystack! It was an unforgettable experience for all and a slur on the officials directly or indirectly involved, besides the individual who was personally responsible for the loss of his weapon. His future in the Army was tainted. Such was the punishment!



As far as a soldier of Christ is concerned, the precious weapon issued to him by the Lord Himself, is the weapon of PRAYER. If the loss of a weapon by one soldier in a battalion in the Army was considered to be a very serious lapse that affected the career of a soldier and his superiors, how much more grave is the loss of the weapon of prayer to a child of God!

As believers in Christ, we are to consider ourselves as Soldiers of Christ in the Army of God and our only weapon, both of offense and defence, is the weapon of Prayer. The more we spend time with God in our Prayer Chamber, the more He is pleased with us by sharpening our weapon of Prayer by His direct involvement! The more a soldier handles his weapon and sharpens his skills of shooting, loading his rifle, unloading and quick handling of stoppages and rectification of defects and addressing trouble shooting; the

In John 18:3-6 we read how a detachment of Roman soldiers accompanied by officers sent by the Chief Priests and Pharisees carrying torches, lanterns and weapons with Judas Iscariot on the lead; met with the Lord along with His disciples near the garden at Gethsemane.

more he becomes skilled at his weapon handling and getting ready for the battles ahead that would save his life and the lives of the others.

A prayer warrior develops intimacy with God and gets to know Him more while engaged in a spiritual warfare against the forces of darkness. In intercessory prayer, a soldier of Christ is literally doing the weapon handling and getting to understand the nuances of warfare with the infilling of the Holy Spirit. In *John 18:3-6* we read how a detachment of Roman soldiers accompanied by officers sent by the Chief Priests and Pharisees carrying torches, lanterns and weapons with Judas Iscariot on the lead; met with the Lord along with His disciples near the garden at Gethsemane. When Jesus stepped out, knowing fully



well about their intentions, asked them, "Whom are you seeking?" And they replied, "Jesus of Nazareth" and with the Lord replying, "I am He", they immediately drew back and fell on the ground in response! That is the power of prayer demonstrated by Jesus after his agonizing Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:40-46), where even the Angel came down from Heaven to strengthen and minister to Him in His agony! Prayer changes things and it supernaturally empowers us!

During my early days in Bikaner, Rajasthan, as a young Lieutenant, I was staying with the other bachelor officers in the accommodation meant for us. One night, the other officers were making merry, drinking late into that Saturday night and engaged in wild drunken revelry with loud music and dancing,

“
With the strong
weapon of Prayer,
Daniel and his friends
were used by God to
come out unscathed
from the hungry
lions in the den or the
furnace of fire! Thus
Nebuchadnezzar, the
strong and mighty
King of the Kingdom
of Babylon officially
announced, "Blessed
be the God of Daniel,
Shadrach, Meshach
and Abed-Nego ...
”

while I was kneeling ajar to ajar by my bedside and praying in agony for these officers engaged in sinful activities.

Soon thereafter in the midnight hour as I was reading the Bible and praying and preparing to attend the following Sunday worship service, I heard a loud thud on my front room door with shouts of, "Father! Open up the door! Open up! Open up!" I was nick-named as 'Father' those days! I would not budge and asked the Lord to help me in my distress since they were all my seniors and in the normal course, I was not supposed to disobey them. I could feel my adrenalin rush and really did not know how to respond to the situation! As I continued in my prayer to the Lord on my knees, suddenly the front door opened a jar with the force of the strong boots kicking against them and with the tower bolt giving way! I was still on my knees and certainly shaken up with this sudden unexpected turn of events!

The senior most among them, a hurly-burly officer, fully drunk, mockingly asked me using very foul language as to what I was doing on my knees by my bedside with the Holy Bible in front of me. The question did not deserve an answer I thought and I remained silent. He and his colleagues thereafter literally demanded me to join them in their revelry. I politely refused, by displaying utmost respect to them by stating that I am a Christian. They laughed out loud and became more menacing toward me and I thought I am going to be mauled! One of them shouted at me angrily using unparliamentary language, "We have seen plenty of Christian officers who drink like fish and perhaps beat us in all such areas"! I remained silent since they were heavily drunk and not in their senses. When they gleaned no response from me, I was physically abused. I thought it unwise to talk to these officers at that time of the night in an inebriated condition.

Then one of them came forward and held my hand and forcibly tried to pull me out of my bedroom to join with them. That's when I picked up courage with a strange anointing of the Holy Spirit in me and I cried out by saying, "leave me in the Name of Jesus!" In a fraction of a second as if some kind of an electric shock hit him, he was thrown back by a few feet with a thud. Suddenly, there was a deathly silence even when they were in their drunken stupor! Very soon, each one literally retraced their steps petrified, by moving out of the room facing me, as if they had seen something that instilled in them a strange fear that engulfed them. I was excitedly praising my Jesus within Who came to my rescue at the nick of the moment by sending His guardian angels to me! That incident changed the perspective of my fellow officers who viewed me differently thereafter. As I look back at that night's divine and supernatural intervention, I can only vouch that our Lord is faithful and just to test us for not more than what we can bear. He is in the business

of sharpening our tools of prayer for our victory in the midst of Persecution. When we prayerfully take a stand for the Lord amidst persecution, it becomes a powerful weapon in our hands. That is because He is faithful by taking a strong stand for us! *When the Lord is with us, who can be against us? - Rom 8:31*

Daniel and his friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were great prayer warriors who ended up using the **powerful weapon of prayer** against persecution to oppose the strong and mighty King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. When Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the King's delicacies or the wine which the King drank (Dan 1:8), the Lord honoured him and his friends by answering their prayers and revealing to them deep secrets and mysteries that only God could reveal to them. With the strong weapon of Prayer, Daniel and his friends were used by God to come out unscathed from the hungry lions in the den or the furnace of fire! Thus Nebuchadnezzar, the strong and mighty King of the Kingdom of Babylon officially announced, "*Blessed be the God of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego ... Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because THERE IS NO OTHER GOD WHO CAN DELIVER LIKE THIS*". Then the King promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon...! - Daniel 3:28-30.

Joseph is yet another great example from the Bible who used the **weapon of prayer** against persecution and who fought his battles personally with God's help. When nobody was there to watch over Joseph except the Lord Whom he feared, God revealed to him through visions and dreams; great secrets and mysteries by which he ultimately became the Prime Minister of Egypt! With the powerful weapon of prayer that he used always and every time and by staying in touch with God, he knew the heart of God and the Lord made his persecutors, including his own blood brothers, to respect him! The value

of prayer as our weapon against our adversaries is something that cannot ever be imagined! Such a weapon being used turns our enemies in becoming our friends.

We hear of Christian Persecution in our nation of India becoming more severe than ever before. It's high time we draw out our weapons of prayer in these days of Persecution and be ready for the Lord to help us.

When we fast and pray and are in personal touch with God, we are like a soldier handling his weapon and sharpening the skills of weapon handling and going to the firing range (prayer closet) to practice our skills of sharp-shooting! That is when the Lord begins to share deep and mysterious things to us. "*The Lord seeks/years for Himself a man after His own heart*" to pray, *intercede and commune with Him - 1 Sam 13:14.*

God seeks to entrust the powerful weapon of prayer into the hands of intercessors and leaders to pray against the forces of darkness that are causing or instigating persecution in the nations. The persecuted Church in India and the ethnic and religious cleansing that is taking place in India, I believe, is being allowed by the Lord! For, He is seated on the Throne and is in control. The situation appears to be getting more and more complex and going out of control in Manipur. As I write these lines, I am overwhelmed with mixed feelings about the stories that are woven around the **loss** of several lives, houses and church buildings in the state of Manipur. It is my prayer and firm belief that during these crucial and complex days when the Church is being subjected to persecution, the Lord will touch the persecuted and their persecutors equally and ultimately, that they



will each experience the salvation through Jesus Christ. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* – John 3:16. **Our Lord loves all** and He abhors killings, destruction, rape, violence, murder and all kinds of evil; which are all perpetrated by the devil and the forces of darkness.

The time is very critical for the churches in India to go down on their knees, using our weapon of prayer against persecution of Christians in Manipur, UP, Chattisgarh and other such states. It is indeed time for us to seek our God of Mercy to act in this emergency and to save our nation from a great calamity and distress.

When the persecuted resort to violence or hatred against the persecutors they do not allow

The time is very critical for the churches in India to go down on their knees, using our weapon of prayer against persecution of Christians in Manipur, UP, Chattisgarh and other such states. It is indeed time for us to seek our God of Mercy to act in this emergency and to save our nation from a great calamity and distress.

the Holy Spirit to work. When Jesus was being subject to persecution, He could have easily commanded a host of His guardian angels to come to His rescue and eliminate those who persecuted and ultimately crucified Him on the cross. Prior to His persecution and crucifixion, Jesus had prayed earnestly at the garden of Gethsemane with much agony till His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (*Luke 22:43-44*). He prayed that if his Father willed the cup of affliction be removed from him, however he prayed not for his will but for the will of His heavenly Father's will to be fulfilled. Father God in heaven with much pain, instead, sent His angel to minister to His Son to strengthen Him! Father God may have encouraged His Son to somehow bear the pain and allow His Blood and Life to be sacrificed on the cross – for the sake of the world and its sinners for the generations to come! The events following are so poignant that it was because of Jesus' awesome sacrifice and pain on the cross, that you and I including the persecutors stood the chance of being saved. So, when we pray for the persecutors, we must look at the matter from God's heart and perspective – not with vengeance or asking God to punish the persecutors. That would not be a godly prayer. Instead, we must pray against Satan and the evil forces of darkness that control the perpetrators of crimes against innocent souls. Our Lord Jesus Himself said in *John 10:10*, *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly"*.

May the Lord help us use our secret weapon of prayer against persecution judiciously and according to His will by tuning our hearts with our Abba Father's heart! That is when He would be pleased with our prayers and answer our prayers miraculously.



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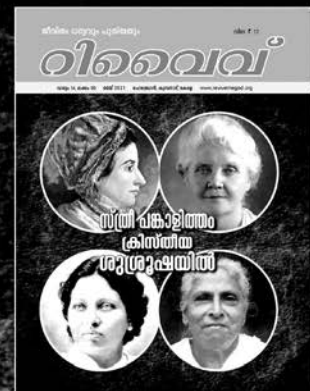
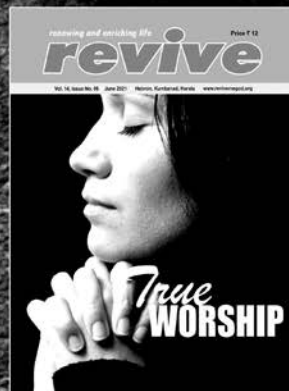
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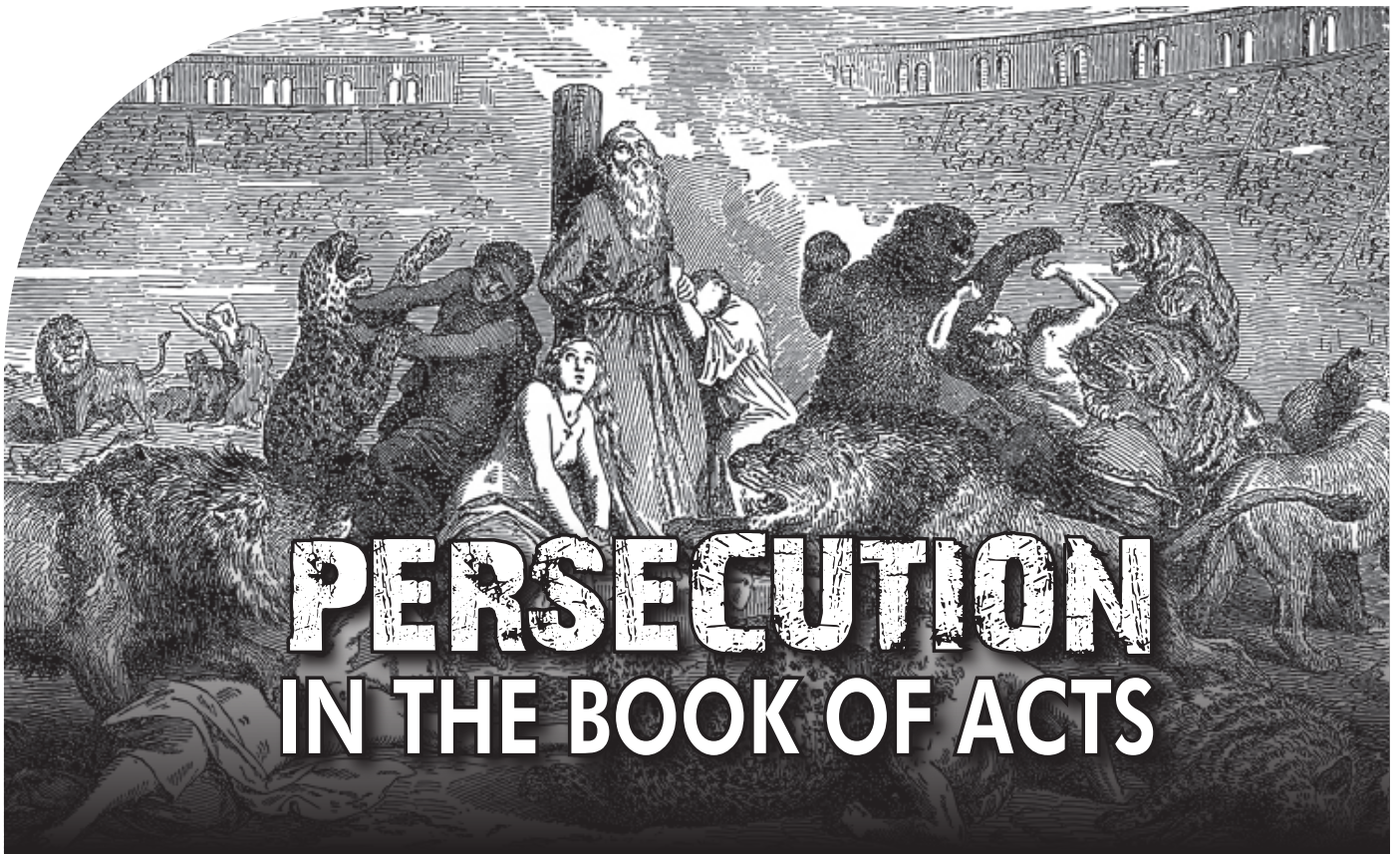
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PERSECUTION IN THE BOOK OF ACTS



Pastor B. SAJI, KAYAMKULAM

Faculty at India Bible College
and Seminary Kumbanad.
Founder-Mizpah Parisheelana
Kendra-an Institution for
Mentally Challenged

Persecution is the act of singling out, victimizing, harassing, oppressing or killing an individual or group because of racial, religious, ethnic or political differences.

Christians are persecuted because of their belief in Jesus Christ.

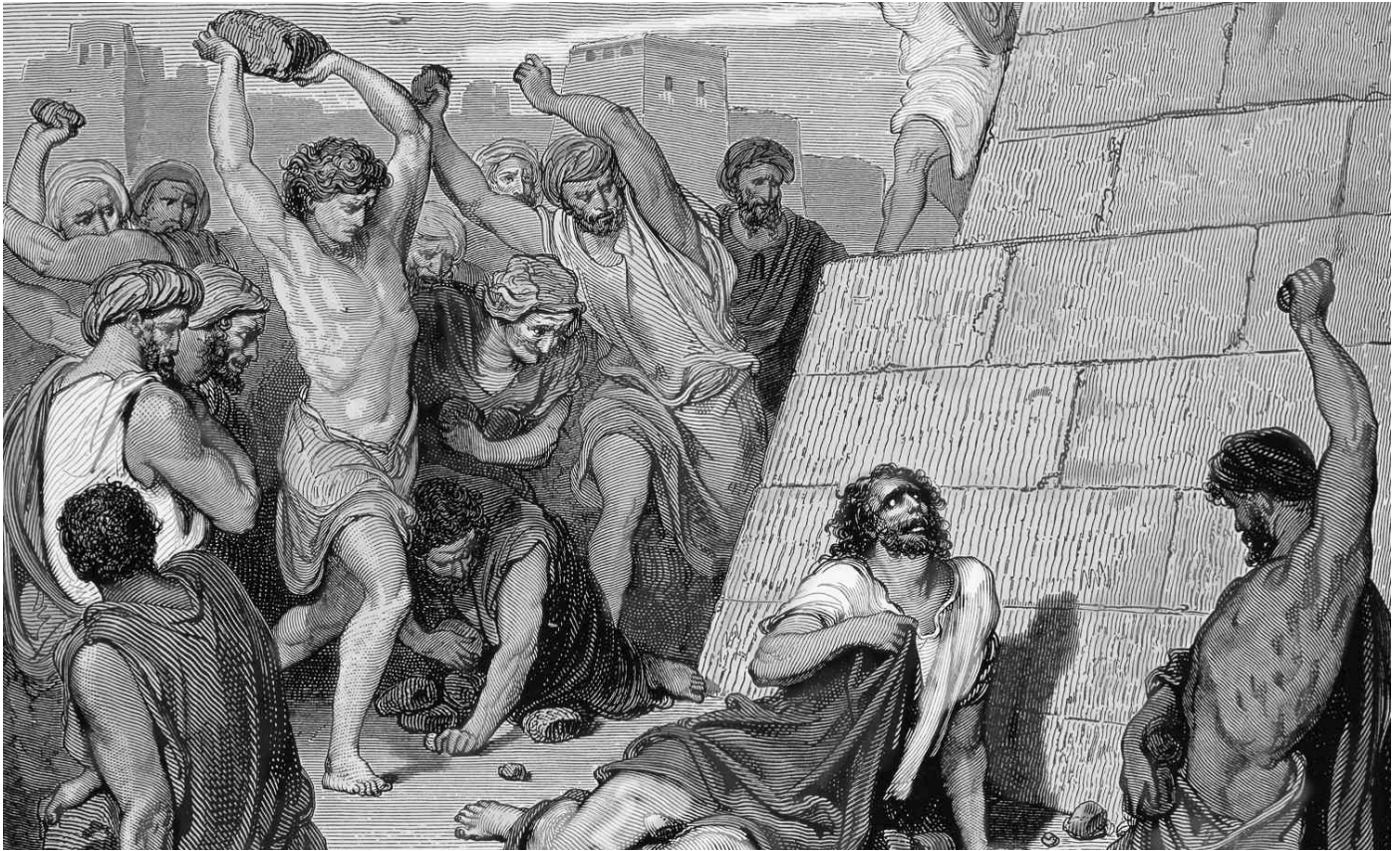
The Bible records persecution of God's people in both the Old Testament and New Testament. The Pharisees persecuted Jesus because He did not follow their man made legalism. Following Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, organized persecution of the early Church took place. One of the most zealous opponents was Saul of Tarsus, later known as the Apostle Paul. After Paul converted to Christianity and became a missionary, the Roman Empire began to terrorize Christians.

Paul was beheaded by order of the Emperor Nero, and the Apostle Peter was reported to have been crucified upside down in a Roman arena. Killing Christians turned into a form of entertainment in Rome, as believers were executed and set on fire.

THE RECORDS OF PERSECUTION IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Luke the physician who authored the book of Acts, describes the picture of the early Christian community in Jerusalem. They experienced the forgiveness, the power of Holy Spirit while sharing the gospel outside of their fellowship. The Christian Church which received the wind of the Spirit, now started to face a perilous storm that shook the church's very existence. The book of Acts deals with five different types of persecutions faced by the early Church. The following gives us a brief description of the same.

The persecution by the Sadducees: (Acts 4:1-32) they were the people who initiated the waves of persecution up on the church. They were the ruling class or the



wealthy aristocrats who had political favour of the Romans. Theologically, they believed that the Messianic age had begun in the Maccabean period. They were not looking for a Messiah. They denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead which the apostles proclaimed in Jesus. Thus they considered the apostles as both agitators and heretics, disturbers of the peace and enemies of the truth. In consequence they were greatly disturbed (4:2). They treated the apostles as unprofessional unauthorized preachers.

The Chief of the temple police, who was responsible for maintenance of law and order, and the high priest put the apostle Peter and John in jail, because it was evening and could not convene the council. But the interesting thing is that, the Sadducees could not hinder the Word of God. Though the apostles were arrested, the gospel could not be confined. On the other side, many who heard the Word believed and the church began to grow (4:4).

The persecutors rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Stephen uttered 'Lord Jesus receive my spirit and lastly he uttered 'Lord do not hold this sin against them'. Stephen was the first Christian martyr.

The Sadducees persecuted the apostles because they were annoyed due to the healing of the cripple with Peter's sermon. Just as the Pentecost event had been the text for his first sermon, so the cripple's healing becomes the text for his second. Peter emphasized that Jesus was once rejected but now resurrected and reigning, and that Jesus made the crippled man strong. His sermon was a Christ centered one. Peter ended his sermon by exalting the name of Jesus. The devil cannot endure the exaltation of Jesus Christ, so he stirred up the Sanhedrin to persecute the apostles.

As a result, the apostles were brought before the council. They questioned, 'By what power or what name they healed the crippled? (4:7). When the council was annoyed, Peter was freshly anointed with the Holy Spirit

and answered that 'it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified'. The court was astonished by the courage of Peter and John, who, though unschooled and ordinary men; realized that they had been with Jesus. They called the apostles and forbade them to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. To this prohibition the apostles replied that the court must judge 'whether it would be right in God's sight to obey them or God (4:19)'. The court threatened and allows them to go.

The Second Arrest and Trial: (Acts 5:17-42)

The Sanhedrin heightens the persecution. The apostolic mission, particularly healing provoked the Sanhedrin. They felt that the apostles ignored the court's prohibition and threats and thus they were angered by the failure of the first assault on the apostles. The Sanhedrin had strictly ordered them to abstain from teaching in the name of Jesus. The high priest and all his associates, who were members of the Sadducees decided to take further action. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. (5:18) but during the night an angel brought them out and instructed them to proclaim the message of new life. On hearing the news, the captain and others were puzzled. In fact, the apostles disobeyed the Sanhedrin and obeyed God's command. The captain of the temple and his officers re-arrested the apostles, and brought them before the Sanhedrin a second time for questioning.

The apostles answer was a mini-sermon. They uplifted Christ rather than defend themselves. Through this they announced that Christians are called to

submit to human authorities, but if the authorities themselves misuse their God given power, the Christian's duty is to disobey the human authority in order to obey God's. The apostles stated that their primary responsibility is to obey God. Hearing the words of defense the council was furious, but Gamaliel, the Rabbi stood up and ordered the apostles to be put outside.

The apostles rejoiced in their tribulation because, it was an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to Christ and it was a real opportunity to share in the experience of Christ. It is true that "those who shared in the cross-bearing would share in the crown – wearing."

Luke the author of Acts brought the account of the two waves of persecution which broke over the infant church. In the first, the Council issued a prohibition and warning, which led the apostles to pray to the Sovereign Lord for boldness to go on preaching. In the second they received a prohibition and a beating, which led them to praise God for the honour of suffering for Christ.

Stephen the Martyr (Acts.6:8 – 7:60):

After the coming of the Spirit and the counter attack of satan, the church is ready to initiate its worldwide mission. This was the time for the gentile mission. So far the church had been composed only of Jews and restricted to Jerusalem. Now, the Holy Spirit is about to thrust his people into the wider world. Stephen-the Martyr, Philip-the evangelist, Saul- the Pharisee, Cornelius - the centurion, these four men contributed to the global expansion of the church.

Stephen the martyr came first. His preaching aroused Jewish opposition. His preaching could not convince the council and thus he was stoned to death. He had vision of a world for Christ, for that he defended the truth as condemnation of his own nation. He uses the panoramic view of Jewish history.

Through his message Stephen announced them guilty of sinning against the Holy Spirit, the Messiah and the law. The Sanhedrin infuriated by his accusations, gnashed their teeth at him. Snarling like wild animals. But Stephen was full of the Holy spirit looked up to heaven and had the vision of the glory of God, and he could see that the heaven opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. The persecutors rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Stephen uttered 'Lord Jesus receive my spirit and lastly he uttered 'Lord do not hold this sin against them'. Stephen was the first Christian martyr.

Havoc of the Church:

Stephen's martyrdom brought a great persecution against the church at Jerusalem. The death of Stephen was the signal for an outbreak of persecution which compelled the Christians to scatter. All except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Before the ascension of Jesus Christ, He commanded his disciples, "you will receive power: and you will be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and all in Judea and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the world" (Acts 1:8). Even after hearing this commandment, the disciples remained in Jerusalem; but now the commission was fulfilled as a result of persecution. The dispersion now resulted in wide spread evangelism. The dispersed Christians scattered the good seed of the gospel. They preached the Word where ever they went. The devil's attack (persecution) had the opposite effect to what he intended. Instead of smothering the gospel, persecution succeeded only in spreading it. " The wind increases the flame".

Saul who had approved of Stephen's stoning now began to destroy the church, a brutal and sadistic cruelty, making a house-to-house search for believers; he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. He



did not spare the women, but he did not stop short of seeking and securing his victims' death (9:1, 22:42, 26:10) Saul made havoc of the church. His was a brutal cruelty. Acts of the apostles and the epistles describe how Saul a member of Sanhedrin and a Pharisee, persecuted the church. He killed the saints (8:1,9:1), Threatened (9:1) bringing them bound unto Jerusalem (9:2), hath done many evils to saints (9:13), persecuted (22:4), do things contrary to the name of Jesus (26:9) shut up in prison and gave voice against them (26:10), a blasphemer and compelled others to blaspheme (26:11, 1 Timo.11:13), persecuted the church and wasted it (Gala.1:13).

Saul was converted to Christianity. This was not a sudden conversion but a sudden surrender. Saul might have asked himself that 'what secret these simple people had which made them face peril and suffering.....' The persecutions to the church and the mar-

tyrdom of Stephen drew Saul near to the risen Christ. Then onwards he became a man who ceased to do what he wanted to do and began to do what Christ wanted of him.

A new wave of persecution upon leaders: (Acts.12:1-10)

It was instigated by King Herod. This was Herod Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus. Luke describes the death of James and imprisonment of Peter, both of them were apostles and leaders of the Jerusalem church. Herod Agrippa I killed James, but Peter was rescued by the intervention of God. The early church realized the destructive power of Herod and the saving power of God. Throughout the history of the church, they grasped the expansion and opposing, growth and shrinkage, advance and retreat. But it is very clear that the powers of death and hell will never prevail against Christ's church since it is built on the Rock.

There is a possibility to think that Peter will not escape from this persecution as he was guarded by four quaternions of soldiers. Peter was chained both hands and soldiers were kept watching on him. In spite of impossibility of liberation, the hand of God definitely worked for peter and he escaped from all perils.

Book of Acts very clearly and vividly explains various persecutions faced by the early church, and how the risen Christ helped them in their difficulties. As a concluding word, may I state the attitude of the early Christians in the midst of all these troubles.

- (i) They prayed: they lifted up their voice with one accord (4:24), the church prayed without ceasing (12:5) Paul with Silas while he was in jail, prayed (16:25)
- (ii) They obeyed God rather than men (5:29)
- (iii) They were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (5:41).
- (iv) They departed the council rejoicing (5:41)
- (v) Looked up steadfastly into heaven (7:55). They saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.
- (vi) They sang praises into God (16:25)
- (vii) The Word of God preached and church began to grow. (8:4)

During this period, the church faces persecution from all areas. When we go through perils, persecutions, difficulties, let us follow the example of our Master and that of our forefathers.

Shri. Oommen Chandy, Chief Minister of Kerala at the 81st IPC General Convention, 2005



Shri. Oommen Chandy had a warm relationship with the India Pentecostal Church and Pastor T.S. Abraham and family



Book release of 'A TRIBUTE' to commemorate the 80th Birthday of Pastor T.S. Abraham



Pastor T.S. Abraham praying for Oommen Chandy



Warm memories of the several visits with Pr. Dr. T. Valsan Abraham and family members



During the funeral service of Pastor T.S. Abraham



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