

Blood in the Fields

Missions: the risks are rising!

“Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain” (Joel 2:1)!

It is foolish to think local churches that are involved in team missions will not experience varying degrees of life threatening situations, and in some cases death itself. Considering the violent approach of the Muslim and Hindu religions toward Christian missionaries, danger is ever present. Apostle Paul clearly warned the people: “But realize this that in the last day’s difficult (perilous) times will come” (2 Tim. 3:1).

During the First Century expansion of the Church, dangers existed throughout the Roman Empire for Christians, yet it only increased their fervor for witnessing. Believers who contend for the faith thrive in a dangerous environment, and fear of the “roaring lion” is reduced because of the comforting, protecting Holy Spirit. No one enjoys suffering or hardship, but if that comes with the preaching of the gospel, let it be, nevertheless the gospel must be preached unto all the world. Again Paul states: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Ro. 8:18).

Philippines:

On May 27 Abu Sabaya, the leader of a Muslim group in the Philippines, kidnapped dozens of people, including a missionary couple, Martin and Gracia Burnham of Wichita, Kansas. The couple had been living and serving in the Nueva Vizcaya Province and Martin wanted to do something special for Gracia on their 18th wedding anniversary, so he took her to an upscale resort on one of the islands. It was there that the Abu Sayyaf swooped in and captured them along with many others and took them to Basilan Island located some 600 miles south of Manila.

Government soldiers are intensely pursuing the kidnapers, even though it threatens the lives of the hostages. As of writing this report, the Burnham’s are still alive, but they need our prayers.

Bob and Jeanne Strobel, Missionaries to the Philippines, have been nurturing a converted Moslem, who continues to be in severe danger from his Muslim family.

China:

Thousands of Chinese Christians are held hostage by Beijing every day, simply because they refuse to deny their faith and submit to the Communist's brand of Christianity. Case in point: Pastor Li Dexian, a house church leader in Guangzhou, has suffered repeated arrests for sharing his religious faith without government permission. Li has been arrested so many times during the past two years that he lost count. On one recent detention, jailers tied his arms and legs together and chained him to a bedpost for three days.

Li has seen imprisoned Christians tortured so badly that their buttocks bled through their clothing. "They suffered this inhumane treatment simply because they failed to meet their daily production quotas in the Chinese labor camp," said Li.

On October 16, 2000, twenty-one-year-old Liu Haitao from Henan province in central China died as the result of severe police beatings. There is no question his death was the result of his witness for Christ, which makes him a martyr for the faith.

India: In India a renewed round of violence against Christians is being experienced. Hindu extremists have assaulted priests and nuns and ransacked Christian churches and schools. A growing atmosphere of religious intolerance in India is threatening to further damage relations between Hindu moderates and Christians.

Daryl Buck, missionary to India, has been under house arrest several times, but continues to preach boldly under difficult and dangerous situations.

Recently, Evangelist Bill Baxley, closely related to the Faith Assembly Tabernacle of Redding, California, testified to me of God's miracle provision of protection while he was in India. He said an armed group of Muslims attacked him, but God hid him from their view. He escaped without harm.

Colombia Christians Face Increasing Danger

On Sunday, March 12, Onofre Hernández Benitez, pastor of the Panamericana Evangelical Church in Arauca, Colombia, was shot by gunmen as he was standing on the sidewalk after morning worship chatting with members of his congregation. He was killed instantly.

March 25th marked the fortieth day of captivity for Jorge Enrique Góomez, the pastor of 18,000 evangelical Christians who attend the Bethesda Missionary Center church in Bogotá, Colombia.

Ivory Coast

Paul and Julie Kraus, Assemblies of God missionaries to Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), are safe after being robbed recently at gunpoint. Four armed bandits used a neighbor to gain access to the Krause's home in Abidjan, the nation's capital.

Before leaving, the thieves locked Paul and Julie, their niece, neighbor and another worker in a bedroom. The Krause's' 17-year-old daughter, Emily, was unnoticed in another room and managed to free them.

"This is a very risky place," Paul Kraus says. "Though we were stunned when bandits entered our home, it is not unusual to be robbed these days in Abidjan."

"We are shaken but not traumatized," says Paul Kraus. "We are trusting God to supply what was lost."

Sudan

They are Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, and Catholics. They are the black Africans of southern Sudan, and for believing that Jesus is God, they are raped, tortured, enslaved, or burned to death at the hands of their Islamic Arab countrymen.

They are crucified—the infant children nailed to trees with steel spikes—or beheaded. In a campaign of systematic genocide, Sudanese government forces spray them with helicopter gunfire to run them off oil-rich land and bomb their hospitals, schools, relief centers, and marketplaces. This is the testimony that Roger Winter, executive director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, recently gave to the House subcommittee on Africa.

The northern Arabs pierce the lips of their torture victims, then insert and shut padlocks to keep them from telling of their ordeals. Beyond the political-economic issues in Sudan's 18-year-old civil war—the south seeks autonomy, inflicting its own military terrors upon Arab civilians—official smothering of religious freedom is part of the government forces' cruelty, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The government in Khartoum imposed Islamic law nearly 10 years ago, and forced conversions (with accompanying genital mutilation) are common.

An elder of the Church of Christ was arrested in 1998 in Kadugli for distributing Bibles. He was beaten by the police so brutally that he almost died. Another man had his hands burned while in police custody following his arrest for preaching in a public place. "In reality, it is very difficult and dangerous to preach the gospel or distribute Christian literature and Scriptures in Sudan, especially outside the church buildings," said one Christian leader. He continues, "It is hard for a Muslim to become a Christian here and leaving Islam is like betraying your family and God and is blasphemy." "All blasphemy in Islam is punishable by death," he explained. If a Christian convert from Islam wishes to make his new faith public, he will face persecution and rejection in Sudan. Islam is aggressively attempting to win converts and often promises good promotion prospects, education and help with business or farming in return for conversion.

Bhutan

Pastor Norbu who preached openly among the mountain tribal people was arrested, thrown into prison and tortured, suffering severe head injuries. He died of a heart attack 10 days after his release.

Egypt

Mohammed W. Dorrah, a Muslim convert to Christianity, was arrested, tortured with electric burners, kicked, slapped and hanged by his hands.

Indonesia

Scores of churches have been burned and many Christians have died in their flames.

Iran

Several pastors have been murdered in the last 5 years.

Iraq

Tens of thousands of Christians have been gassed, shot, or forced to leave their homes.

Laos

A young pastor was publicly bound in chains and placed in a pit for four days.

Nigeria

The military continues to destroy churches, terrorizes Christians and occasionally kills them.

Pakistan

A mob of 30,000 Muslims descended on Christian villages burning churches, vehicles and homes.

Saudi Arabia

It has been reported that Christians have been arrested on false charges, imprisoned, and even beheaded because of their faith.

Vietnam

Believers are harassed, beaten and imprisoned for illegally preaching and organizing evangelistic activities.

Many mission teams are going throughout the world each year from the Full Gospel Fellowship, and they need your prayers. The Burnham Story is a wake-up-call to all of us who travel and minister the gospel in other countries where government protection from violence is very limited.

The war in the spirit dimension is intensifying as the time grows near to the coming of the Lord. Satan knows his time is short upon the earth. The church, also, knows they must become more aggressive with the great commission. The battle lines are drawn, and there is no retreat for the believer.

Leon Willis