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Rev. Vijayesh Lal

From the General Secretary

National Day of Prayer 2021

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God:
that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*
1 John 5:14

God loves the nation of India and is at work in it. The Church has been called to pray and work for the peace, prosperity, and stability of the nation. The state of our nation and the challenges it faces, stirs us to look to the face of the Almighty God and to pray for His unceasing blessings on India.

The National Council of Churches in India and Evangelical Fellowship of India are jointly facilitating the observance of the National Day of Prayer on 15th August 2021

across India to earnestly intercede for our country, our leaders, and our fellow citizens.

An appeal is being made to all Churches, Prayer Movements, Christian organizations, and individual Christians across denominations, to observe 15th August 2021, which is a Sunday, as a day dedicated to prayer for the well-being, peace, and prosperity of our country.

The National Day of Prayer campaign started in 2017 with the Evangelical Fellowship of India humbly initiating it. EFI

Member Churches and Bodies resolved to observe the National Day of Prayer annually on the Sunday closest to Independence Day of India. Since 2019, the National Council of Churches in India has also endorsed the same and now the NCCI and EFI jointly facilitate the National Day of Prayer.

The National Day of Prayer is envisioned as an ecumenical movement, freely owned by all, and requires our united efforts which undoubtedly will promote unity and revive our witness and service by the grace of God.

To achieve this, we seek your

support in disseminating this information to your churches to be a part of this initiative. Please do observe this day in your Churches, prayer fellowships and homes. You can send us testimonies and photographs of how you observed this day and interceded for our nation on mail@nationaldayofprayer.in.

Resources for the National Day of Prayer can be downloaded from the website : www.nationaldayofprayer.in.

Warm regards,

Rev. Vijayesh Lal
General Secretary
Evangelical Fellowship of India

“Let my prayer
stand before you like
incense; let my uplifted
hands be like the
evening offering.”

PSALM 141:2



FREEDOM GAINED, FREEDOM LOST

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

When I was in school, our first Indian principal, would regularly read Rabindranath Tagore's poem about the mind without fear, at the Independence Day and Republic Day assemblies. It was a ritual with him. As a boy, I didn't pay much attention to the words of the poem, but just thought of the poem as a feature of these national days, just like the tradition of ending the assemblies with the singing of the national anthem.

Prayer for India

Here's what Tagore wrote:
Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been
broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the

depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches
its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of
dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by
thee
Into ever-widening thought and
action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my
Father, let my country awake.

When Tagore wrote the poem, India had not gained independence. It was his prayer for India – that it would become a place where the mind could be without fear and that the country would wake up in the heaven of freedom. Has this prayer been answered?

India did gain independence in 1947, but it would be ridiculous to say that, that freedom has been safeguarded till now. The martyrdom of the late Stan Swamy says it all.

By the way, why call it martyrdom? Let's call it political assassination or cold-blooded murder, because that is what it was.

India Today

What kind of freedom do we have in India today? The mind is certainly not without fear here. If the entire might of the government can pick up a person on mere suspicion, incarcerate him without any proof of wrongdoing, and keep on stonewalling him to prevent him getting justice, we must all be afraid. This is India today.

An 84 year old man suffering from advanced Parkinson's was the one whom the Government of India dubbed terrorist. Why was the government so afraid of this physically feeble man?

Stan Swamy issued a note that was originally published on July 31, 2018 and was republished on July 5, 2021 after his death while in custody.

"Over the last two decades, I have identified myself with the adivasi people and their struggle for a life of dignity and self respect. As a writer, I have tried to analyse the different issues they face. In this process, I have clearly expressed my dissent over several policies and laws enacted by the government in the light of the Indian constitution. I have questioned the validity, legality and justness of several steps taken by the government and the ruling class."

He asserted that the adivasis have been "exploited and oppressed beyond tolerance. The rich minerals which are excavated in their land have enriched outsider industrialists and businessmen and impoverished the adivasi people to the extent that people have died of starvation. They have had no share in what is produced."

He "questioned the half-hearted action of government on the Forest Rights Act, 2006. 'Jal, jungle, jameen', as we know, are the basis of the economic life of the adivasi people. Their traditional rights in the forest have been infringed upon systematically over the decades."



Gautam Benegal

5h · 🌐

...

He wouldn't have survived long. It was inevitable. It was murder and nothing else. But the prolonged torture Stan Swamy faced, at his age and in his condition even in the face of all the protests, was deliberately imposed by the State, and done so defiantly, blatantly, and openly to make a point and an example. It was premeditated. And it was bloodyminded malice baring its fangs from the highest level. But Stan Swamy's defiance was of an epic level. He stuck to his convictions to the very last. All the might and power of the State could not break an 84 year old man with so many ailments, infected by Covid. He won in the end. And like Graham Steines' widow, I am sure that like the Christian he was, true to his faith, he forgave his oppressors. They win twice over, these Christians. Oppression is the furnace where the faith of Christians is forged to unbreakable steel. What did the State achieve by murdering Fr. Swamy? Millions more rising up even stronger in their faith.

He also raised the issue that "the SC observation is being ignored that 'mere membership of a banned organisation will not make a person a criminal unless he resorts to violence or incites people to violence or creates public disorder by violence or incitement to violence'. The court rejected the doctrine of 'guilt by association'. It is common knowledge that many young men and women are held in prison on the suspicion of being 'helpers of Naxalites'. After arresting them, other penal clauses are added on. It is an easy label that can be put on any one whom the police

want to catch. It does not require any proof or witness. The Supreme Court says even membership in a banned organisation does not make a person a criminal. How far removed are the law and order forces from the judiciary?

After raising some other questions Fr. Stan Swamy ended his note with the words, *"If this makes me a 'deshdrohi' then so be it!"*

This man was an inconvenience to the government and a threat to the business mafia which exploits the masses, the poor. That is why he was jailed and held without bail, even though there was no case against him. That this was done to an infirm old man who never resorted to violence or advocated it, is what is frightening.

Three Other Martyrs

What was done to Swamy is not as frightening as what Graham Staines, and his very young sons Phillip, 10, and Timothy, 7, experienced when their old station wagon was surrounded by a bloodthirsty mob, and it became clear that their vehicle was going to be set on fire with

them in it. Obviously, there is no record of what they felt, but no one can deny it would have struck fear into the hearts of the two little ones and maybe even more in the heart of their father at the thought of what would happen to his boys. Why were they burnt to death in January 1999 by members of the Bajrang Dal led by one Dara Singh?

Staines came to Orissa in 1965 to see a pen pal who shared the same birthday with him. While on his visit, he saw the work being done in the century-old Leprosy Home in Baripada and was touched and stayed back to work with the Home. Sporting his trademark hat and wheeling his rickety bicycle, Saibo – as he was popularly called – was a common sight in Baripada and was known to be doing 'God's work', tending and nursing leprosy patients. His dedicated service won him many hearts. He did preach the gospel, and probably some responded because their lives had been touched by the love of Christ that motivated the man to work with lepers, who were "untouchable" and "outcast". It was for touching the lives of the untouchables and other tribal persons and winning them for Christ, that Staines and

his sons were murdered.

When the Staines murders took place, it was the work of a fanatical religious group with political connections. On the other hand, when Swamy was murdered, the government itself was involved (through the agency of investigating officials and government bodies and special courts). That is, the antagonism and animosity had been stepped up and made official. Though other reasons were cited (conversion activities and involvement with terrorists, respectively), in both cases, they were targeted for being perceived to disturb the demographic equilibrium of the particular states they were working in. Upper caste folks want people they consider beneath them to know their place, do the dirty work and not buck the system.

Harijan? No, Dalit

Gandhi called those deemed to be untouchable Harijan – meaning, children of God. Gandhi attempted to promote the term to avoid the stigma associated with terms like bhangi and chamar, identifying the outcaste by the menial (rather, dehumanising) work they were

forced to do for the upper castes for generations immemorial. However, Gandhi's insistence on the usage of the term Harijan may have stemmed from his desire to keep the outcastes shackled to Hinduism because many of them had begun verbal attacks and stridently proclaim anti-Hindu diatribes. The intellectuals among the outcaste argued that it was mere condescension and a farcical euphemism as long as the wrongs of centuries were not righted. In time, the term Harijan became as defamatory as the terms it was to replace.

The oppressed classes gave themselves the name Dalit – an aggressive assertion that their deplorable condition cannot be sugar-coated, glossed over and swept under the carpet. The upper castes will have to face up to the injustices and indignities they were subjected to. It is also an assertion that they will no longer take things lying down. While some have protested peacefully, others have joined Maoist groups and resorted to violence. This was how they managed to justify jailing Swamy. They clubbed him with those who threatened violence and were

allegedly plotting to assassinate the Prime Minister). Though accused to be aligned with Maoist forces advocating and encouraging violence, Swamy was no Maoist. He believed only in peaceful protests.

It is absolutely undeniable that Swamy was targeted for siding with the downtrodden, oppressed and exploited adivasis and dalits. This was his only "crime".

The Challenge of Missionaries

Just as earlier/pre-Independence reforms (the abolition of child marriage and sati) were initiated in response to the impact that Christian mission was having in India, it is to be noted that until Christian missionaries showed interest in uplifting downtrodden folks, no one was interested in them. They were considered to be outside the bounds of Varnashrama Dharma, and were not regarded as Hindus. Adivasis or tribals and untouchables were all on the outside.

Reaching out to the outcast has been labelled as proselytisation because Hindu fanatics regard all humanitarian work as having the ulterior motive of capturing people so that Christians can

become the majority. That the charge is baseless and ridiculous can be seen by studying the census figures. After all these centuries, Christians are still only about 3% of the entire population of India. When I was in college, they said that it was 2%.

Freedom has been lost officially even though the Constitution still guarantees certain Fundamental Rights to minorities. But the real issue is not that Christians are converting people. They are at the forefront of all social upliftment. The Christian missionary goes where no one has gone, caring for the downtrodden when no one cares: for instance, the late Mother Teresa. And for this, there is a rabid gang screaming, "Leave the downtrodden where they are, or else we will come for you."

You do know that Jesus was against the upper class religious fanatics of His day, don't you? His actions and teachings broke the shackles of Sabbath laws imposed by the Brahmins of His day to harass common folks. He opposed those doing business in the space meant for outsiders to pray. For all this, He was falsely

accused of being one who was intent on setting up His own kingdom so that the Roman governor would have to take action.

Our Lord claimed that God had sent Him to bring freedom to people:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Lk. 4:18-19).

What do you think the Government of India would do to Jesus? But why single out this government? What would any government anywhere in the world do to Jesus if He stood with those who are poor and powerless, instead of siding with the rich and powerful of a country?

All over the world, in this day and age of democracy, decade after decade, those who have preached the gospel of the Lord Jesus and advocated that the poor are not to be exploited and

actively worked for social upliftment have found themselves harassed and troubled and some have even been done to death: just like Graham Staines, just like Stan Swamy.



And Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of my brethren you have done it unto me."

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In August, we celebrate the 74th anniversary of our independence. At the time of independence itself, the day did not meet with unanimous joy. There were those who had lost loved ones and land and property who could only mourn. It is well known too that certain right-wing groups which favoured an Akhand Bharat, also did not welcome independence in the form it arrived. The communists too had raised the then famous or rather infamous slogan- "*yeh azadi jhoohi hai*" .. this is a false independence. They meant that that this independence would not mean anything to the ordinary people fighting for daily survival and that this was a festival of the elite. For a newly independent nation drunk on freedom and the prospect of power with its

trappings and to the ageing freedom fighters tired of coarse khaddar and coarser prison food, this was too much to swallow. Both Left wing and Right wings found themselves banned and in the wilderness shortly after independence and remained banned till the eve of the first general elections.

In the post-world war era, when the first wave of decolonisation happened and many countries were given their independence, India was the most prominent of those let go. Most prominent in the sense that India was considered the crown jewel of the British empire and the British King was separately designated too as the emperor of India. India's independence was also unique because the

independence struggle was fueled by non-violent activism. Mahatma Gandhi, the key face of the independence movement went on to inspire others in India and abroad. Some key Indian names that come to mind readily are those of Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narain and Sunderlal Bahuguna and possibly Medha Patkar. Of course, there are a lot more whose names are not here because they were possibly local voices whose names did not make it to the national headlines.

It is tempting to trace this course of events to a particular ideology or government, but one must not do so. Recently, we paid our respects to the late Fr. Stan Swamy who was arrested under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). One must remember that the law was first enacted in 1967 and amended in 2008. One of the earliest arrests under the amended Act was in West Bengal happened in 2009 when the erstwhile Left Front government was in power in West Bengal, supposedly a progressive government. Dr Binayak Sen was arrested in Chattisgarh in 2007 and Medha Patkar who has been arrested many times, was first picked up in 1994. Sunder Lal

Bahuguna was arrested in 1991.

So, what has all this history got to do with us as Christians. A lot if you believe that independence means that now one has the freedom of speech and expression which as a colony citizen, one did not have. And if you feel that the government of the day is following policies that are improper, you should express your dissent. There are of course those Christians who believe in unquestioning submission to the governing authorities interpreting Romans 13 verses 1 to 7 in that fashion. For them suppression of dissent is of little consequence as they have no plans to dissent. But for the most of us we would love to submit to our governments but that there are also boundaries that are set, beyond which we will dissent.

Violent dissent against the State as expressed by Maoist and other underground groups of varied ideologies is not a Christian option. But non-violent expression of disagreement while still rendering unto Caesar, what is every Christian's responsibility. As citizens of the Kingdom, it is incumbent on us to not only incarnate Kingdom characteristics individually but

also corporately. Peaceful protest is a legitimate Christian tool and rights a citizen must rightfully exercise. But what does one do when even these options are closed ? Expressing dissent is not unique to Christians, Gandhians do it as do other peace activists.

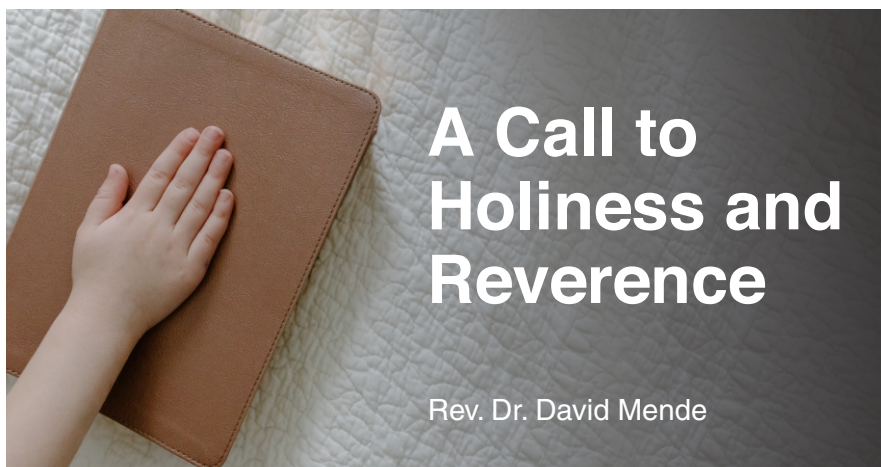
As Indian citizens and Christians, we have responsibility in attempting to shape the economic, political and social life of the nation along with other citizens. It is therefore valuable for all of us as individuals, communities, a nation, a world to form, a vision of a world more in accord with God's Word and promote that vision. Jesus wants us to develop and live a common ethic, promote an atmosphere of non-violence, a culture of basic human rights, widespread and democratic ownership of capital, and a world democratic federation. Whenever the politics and policies of the state run contrary this Kingdom vision, Christians have no choice but to dissent with the state.

Our faith gives us a respite from the troubles of our world, a place of refreshment, light, and peace. But if religion is only an escape, or a private matter--if religion

does not play an essential role in our everyday lives, what is the purpose of God's special intervention through Revelation, the Incarnation, and Redemption? A private religion is irrelevant, trivial, and a contradiction in terms. The reign of God is by its nature social. Churches indeed have the benefit of humanizing and moderating values and can often build bridges instead of walls. On this Independence day, we will do well to recall and remember afresh what is expected of us as Christians and citizens.



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Introduction

Every year, August 12th is celebrated as International Youth Day. Today's youth have more avenues for temptation than any other generation in the past. With the tap on a phone screen, the youth are exposed to all sorts of evil. Many young people are spending their time and energy on sinful activities that displeases God. Further, since many young people don't see a fear of God in their parents, the same attitude creeps into their lives as well. That's why, we need to heed the call that apostle Peter is giving us today. In this article, I give a brief exposition of 1 Peter 1:14-19.

The first epistle by Peter is written to "God's elect, strangers in the

world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (1:1; all these places are in northern Asia Minor or modern Turkey). The churches in these places comprised of Christians from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. Their basic problem was to live for God, amid a society ignorant of the true God. The word "therefore" in verse 13 introduces three imperatives mentioned in verses 14-17.

Verse 13 says that we need to set our hope on the grace that will be revealed at Christ's second coming. Then, he gives two more imperatives in the following verses; I want to talk about these two commands mentioned in verses 14-19.

In 1 Peter 1:14-19, Peter teaches that God's children must live holy and reverential lives. The main message of this article is: **God's command to live holy and reverential lives is based on his calling and the infinite price with which we were bought.**

1. God Commands Us to Live Holy Lives (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

God's command is loud and clear. We ought to live holy lives. We are commanded to live holy lives for three reasons:

a. Because we are pulled towards sinful desires (v. 14).

We must not be conformed to the passions (lusts) of our former ignorance. Peter picks up this theme in 4:2-3 as well (cf. Eph. 2:1-3). Sometimes, our former desires keep pulling us, but we must resist those evil desires. We can't live like ignorant people anymore. That's why Apostle Paul says this in Acts 17:30-31: "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has

given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Sin is dangerous and devastating. As someone said, "Sin will take you farther than you intended to go; keep you longer than you planned to stay; and cost you more than you wanted to pay." Writing to the Christians in Rome, Paul says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). We cannot live like the world around us. Instead of desiring evil things, we need to desire God and the things of God. As Peter writes elsewhere, we need to desire God's Word: "So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Pet. 2:1-3).

You can never overcome evil desires by constantly rebuking them. You need to replace those evil desires by desiring God. In Psalm 63:5-7, we see that the psalmist delighted in God: "My

soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy." God commands us to live holy lives because he knows that we are constantly pulled towards our former desires.

b. Because we are God's children (v. 14).

Since we are born again (v. 3), we are adopted as the children of God. We were chosen by God to be obedient to Jesus Christ (v. 2), not just to be saved and baptized and then live a disobedient life. Peter exhorts his audience and us to live like obedient children. In those days, minor children were expected to be obedient to their parents (Deut. 21:18-21). It's not enough to call ourselves children of God. We ought to be obedient children of God.

Listen to the heartbreaking words of Yahweh in Malachi 1:6: "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a

master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?'"

If you call God your Father, then you must honor him by living a holy life. Once, you enjoyed listening to ungodly jokes with your friends. You participated in their ungodly activities. You longed for the things they longed for. But now you are a child of God. Don't be conformed to the former passions. Don't act as if you are still unsaved and ignorant. You have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light (2:9). Remember, you are God's child!

c. Because we are called to reflect God's nature (vv. 15-16).

Verse 15 says that we are called by God. We are not called by a mere human or an angel. Each one of us is called by God of the universe himself. Further, he calls us to be holy (v. 16; cf. Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7, 26). He calls us to be distinct in our lifestyle. He calls us to be pure in our daily life.

We have to be holy in all our

conduct. In other words, we have to be distinct and pure in every aspect of our lives. Some people think that you need to be holy in the church, but you can live as you want to live at home or in the workplace. Holiness must be a lifestyle of Christians, not mere adherence to a set of rules. Living a lifestyle of holiness is the antidote for hypocrisy.

And please notice verse 16, just as children imitate their parents, God expects us to imitate him in his holiness. Since we are children of God, we need to reflect God's nature. Jesus taught us to "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). People around us must be able to see the difference in us. Your classmates and friends must be able to say that you are different. Your neighbors must be able to recognize that you are distinct in your lifestyle. You have the responsibility to show Christ to others. The reason God placed you where you are is so that you will reveal God to them through your lifestyle.

So, God commands us to live a holy life.

2. God Commands Us to Live Reverential Lives (1 Pet. 1:17-19).

Peter exhorts us to conduct ourselves with fear throughout our exile (cf. v. 1). The Greek word for "exile" means "resident aliens." They were not local citizens, but they had greater rights than newcomers. Until Jesus comes and merges heaven with the earth, we live as exiles in this world. We are yet to enter into our Promised Land. Even as we live as exiles in this world, our behavior should be marked with the fear of God. Some Christians don't have the fear of God. They think that God is another human.

Why must we live reverential lives?

a. Because we will be judged impartially by God (v. 17).

The reason we need to fear God is that our Father is not just loving, but he is also holy and just. God is not just our Father, but also our Judge. Sometimes, we see God as a grandparent. Grandparents are generally lenient with their grandchildren because they love them a lot. But that's not how God is. He is both loving and just.

And just because we are his children, he will not show partiality while judging us. There is no partiality with God (Deut. 10:17). Peter is probably talking about judgment in this life and in the life to come (2 Cor. 5:10). We need to fear God's discipline and displeasure. If we don't fear God, it can lead to painful discipline (Heb. 12:5ff). Let me quote Charles Spurgeon here. He said, "The most terrible warning to impenitent men in all the world is the death of Christ. For if God spared not His only Son, on whom was only laid imputed sin, will He spare sinners whose sins are their own?" How true! We must remember that God is just.

b. Because of the infinite price with which we were bought (vv. 18-19).

We have to keep reminding ourselves that we were bought at a great price. When you value your salvation and redemption, you'll be grateful to God. When we don't meditate on the fact that God has been extremely merciful towards us, we tend to take God for granted. That's why we participate in the Lord's Supper

regularly. Every time we partake of the bread and the grape juice, we are reminded of the infinite price that Christ had to pay on the cross for our sins. We need to fear God, but the kind of fear we are called to have is not a dreadful or paralyzing fear. We fear God because we love God (cf. v. 8)!

And how did God demonstrate his love for us? He bought us at an infinite price. He bought us with the precious blood of his Son. We were ransomed by God from futile ways. Just as the Jewish people were ransomed from Egypt, we were ransomed from futile ways. To the Jewish people, idolatry and sexual immorality were futile. So, Peter is saying that God ransomed them from the futile ways of their ancestors.

At the end of the day, all sin is futile. It cannot give us lasting happiness. Peter says that we were not ransomed with perishable things like silver or gold. Silver or gold is insufficient to purchase our redemption. Rather, we were ransomed with the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus is the Passover Lamb who

did not have any blemish or spot (Lev. 22:21; Num. 19:2). He was the perfect sacrifice who gave himself up for us so that we can be redeemed. That's why, we need to fear the Lord.

As apostle Paul says in 1 Cor. 6:19-20: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

Conclusion

We've seen that God's command to live holy and reverential lives is based on his calling and the infinite price with which we were bought.

Some of us need to repent of our sins and start living a life of holiness and reverence. We must realize that we can't live a holy life on our own strength. If you are not saved, admit that you are a sinner and repent of your sins. Christ is willing to transform you to be his obedient child.

Some of you are saved and baptized, but you have failed to keep your eyes on Jesus. You have failed to live a life of holiness and reverence. But today, God wants to revive your life and make

you a holy vessel. Pursue Jesus with all your might and you'll realize that the desires for sinful things will slowly fade away. Make a commitment to live a life of holiness and reverence in the power of the Spirit.

P.S. This article is adapted from Dr. David Mende's book, *Powerful Sermons for Special Occasions*. You may contact him for copies of this book.



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International Friendship Day



Mr. Chacko Thomas

I thank God that such an International Day exists.

All over the world Nationalism is on the rise. Everyone has their "idols". These "idols" can be language, religion, system of politics or economics, sexual orientation, you name it.

As the African proverb says, "when the elephants play, the grass gets hurt." I must confess that I have seen elephants fight for dominance, I have yet to see them play on grass.

One UN website reads, "Our world faces many challenges, crises, and forces of division — such as poverty, violence, and human rights abuses — among many others — that undermine

peace, security, development and social harmony among the world's peoples.

"To confront those crises and challenges, their root causes must be addressed by promoting and defending a shared spirit of human solidarity that takes many forms — the simplest of which is friendship." The idea is that friendship between peoples, countries, cultures and individuals can inspire peace efforts and build bridges between communities.

The UN has been charged with a superhuman task, to hold together nearly 200 countries together. Try to imagine uniting India, China, Pakistan, USA, Russia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria etc.

Can you feel something of the weight of the burden? Some Christians are known to blame UN for failing in its job, and its failures are obvious to all. What is the right Christian response? What is the Biblical response?

In recent years, I have listened to several heads of State speak at the UN General Assembly. I will not tell you what I think of them. We are not going to agree on each country. But their speeches did give me a desire to pray for these leaders and their nations.

I remember the first time an OM leader asked me to pray for Pakistan back in 1971. Oh, the shock I felt, and it took me more than a few moments to pull myself together and pray. I needed that crisis. The country has been in my prayers ever since, in fact it is one of the countries I pray for more than any other except for India. Part of the reason is that one of my good friends is investing in educating the poorest of the poor Christians in Pakistan. He regularly updates our team on the nation. Many of us do not pray because we do not know what the prayer needs are.

In 1977, I had the honour of

driving overland from Belgium to New Delhi. Many of these nations along the way have been in my prayers ever since. It is not difficult these days to gather information on any nation. One of my prized possessions is a book called "Operation World" originally edited by Patrick Johnstone, now edited by Jason Mandryk. It has about 40 pages on India, much of it being background information and prayer and praise items. God has blessed India in recent decades through the prayers of the Church worldwide. Why not ask God to put one or more countries upon your heart for prayer.

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks".

This motto is on a block of granite outside the United Nations Headquarters in New York. I wonder how many who work there realise that it is taken from the Bible. But it is a great motivation to have for international relationships. We are so quick to draw the sword and pick up the spears.

The verse is found in Isaiah 2:4
"He will judge between the nations and will render decisions

for many peoples; and **they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.** Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war. It follows a call on God's people "Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the LORD." Isaiah 2:5. So the solution is on its way, the Zeal of the Lord will accomplish it.

Meanwhile, the UN Friendship Day is one good attempt at peace. I pray that many Christians would serve in one of the many departments of the United Nations. I have a friend whose son serves under the UN in Sudan. My wife and I have a friend who served in several countries through her country's (Germany) Embassy. On the Home front, how desperately we need Indian Christians to show hospitality to foreigners who have come to our shores for education or employment. This is a great mission field for Christian students, parents, and teachers.

I thank God for Christians like Jimmy Carter, the former President of the United States, Brother Andrew of Open Doors (Holland), President Nelson

Mandela of South Africa, Martin Luther King, and others. It is not surprising that Christians have been on the forefront of peace more than any other. The world is in desperate need for more peacemakers.

Looking around our world you may conclude that we are fighting a losing battle. Just look at our own border situation with China and Pakistan. What about all the cyber-wars between USA, Russia and other nations? Consider all the internal struggles between people groups in individual countries like Israel, Haiti, South Africa, Columbia, Ethiopia, Myanmar and other nations including India. But we do not want to give up hope. God is for peace.

One of the roles the Apostle Paul played is of Peacemaker (Philippians 4: 1-5). Our Lord said that "Blessed are the peacemakers." Blessed are those who has a God given ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18. I am blessed to be serving in an international organisation where the founder values interpersonal relationships very highly. Unity

and Love are important Bible Doctrines, sadly not recognised as such.

Salt of the earth and light of the world. Light is most needed where there is total darkness. Salt is most needed where there is total decay. Can you imagine how dark this world would be and how rotten, if it were not for the light of the Gospel? God did not want to take us out of this world (John 17:15, 17). The world needs us to function as salt and light, even outside the four walls of our church buildings. As light and salt, the Christians are irreplaceable. Churches need to become a place where such leaders are raised up.

Our God is the God of all nations. He is not a respecter of nations, preferring one nation or race above another. This is true in the case of the people groups within India as well. He has no preference of a language or a state. The whole country is "God's own country." The earth is the Lord's (Psalm 24:1).

Although far from perfect, I can appreciate all peoples everywhere, including the

hundreds of different types of Indians in our country. I appreciate the diversity and the unity we possess as human beings all over the world. In the words of John Wesley, "The world is my Parish." I am a citizen of the world. It took some transformation(s), I admit, painful at times. I had to get out of my Comfort Zones again and again. It has been my privilege to visit 107 countries of the world. People ask me, "Which country is your favourite?" I say, all of them, I have found wonderful and loving people everywhere I went. I owe this mindset primarily to a Biblical worldview.

Beautiful Shoes for beautiful Feet. "For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News..." (Ephesians 6:15NLT). F. B. Meyer in his Topical Commentary on Ephesians comments on this verse. "If the gospel of peace is our message, the peace of God should cover our face with a holy calm, breath through our lips like a benediction and diffuse itself like dew of the Lord over the places of human rivalry and hatred. ... We, then, should always be on the alert to promote peace and love among

people, ..." I like that. Oh, may God raise up an army of Christians who have beautiful feet shod with beautiful shoes.

I recently read a good book entitled "City Lives", subtitled "True stories of changed lives from the workplace." They come from all different worlds; Politics, Business, Sports, Fashion, Banking etc. All of them at the top or near the top of their profession. One of them a top Cabinet Minister. Another an Olympic Medallist. High Court Judge, Bank CEO, Major General and more are included. I especially thank God for many Christians in the western world involved in politics. The church produced the leaders and the leaders led their nations. Thank God for the Queen Elisabeth II, one book on her life is entitled, "The Queen and the King She Serves" King Jesus.

Let the Nations Be Glad and Sing for Joy. God's method includes United Nations, but it is a recent development. God's chosen method is to bless His people and they in turn bless the nations. It is well expressed in Psalm 67 which is quoted below.

He wants to be involved in the nations through you and me. He wants joyful nations. Please study this Psalm and preach it.

Psalm 67 (NASB)

God be gracious to us and bless us,

And cause His face to shine upon us— Selah

2 That Your way may be known on the earth,
Your salvation among all nations.

3 May the peoples praise You, God;

May all the peoples praise You.

4 May the nations be glad and sing for joy;

For You will judge the peoples with fairness

And guide the nations on the earth. Selah

5 May the peoples praise You, God;

May all the peoples praise You.

6 The earth has yielded its produce;

God, our God, blesses us.

7 God blesses us,

So that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

May God bless the nations through us. May we make this our personal prayer.

God is the best Friend. On this occasion of "International Friendship Day", let me say in closing that the best friend any one can have as an individual or as a nation is God Himself. He was a friend of Abraham. Our Lord told his disciple that "I have called you friends" (John 15:15b.) "A friend loves at all times" (Pro. 17:17) That is God's friendship. He is the one we want to represent in this world.

And I look forward to the day when people from every tribe, tongue and nation serve together as one flock under one Shepherd.



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*Encourage each
other & build
each other up.*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

WITH STANDING PEER PRESSURE TO ENJOY DIVINE PLEASURE!



Rev. Dr. Duke Jeyaraj

In a month when the world celebrates Friendship Day, it may be a good idea to think about handling peer pressure.

Peer pressure. Each day it jabs at you as you rub shoulders with your pals at High School. Time and again, it nudges you as you walk hands on shoulder with your buddies at college. Repeatedly, it bumps into you as you jostle with the people at your work-spot. There are friends in your world who pressure you, prod you to do things that you pretty well know, won't please the Lord. "A sip of Rum won't rub away your saintliness," your associate remarks in an attempt to make you somehow join him in drinking. "What's your opinion about him?

Come on speak up!" your mates coax you to join their round table conference where nothing but backbiting and gossip are going on. "You really haven't lived if you haven't yet made a visit to this salacious site," your Internet-insane chum says cajoling you to copy his porn-site visiting habit. One of the reasons why urban 13-17-year-olds have sex is because their "friends have it" (according to a survey published in Outlook magazine). Well, don't tell me that you haven't faced peer pressure in your life and existence. You certainly have. And, absolutely will. Hey, listen – Jesus actually predicted that each of his followers would encounter peer pressure! He did

not preach, "If the world hates you..." Instead, He preached, "When the world hates you..." (John 15:18). Did not our Lord say, "Everyone will hate you because of your allegiance to me. But those who endure to the end will be saved" (Math 10:22)? Can we not say that on the basis of this verse, handling peer pressure (among other sorts of pressures) is a matter that is so important it concerns our eternal salvation?

A DIRECT COMMAND

Did you know that there is a direct command in the Bible that we must not bow to peer pressure? The Bible does not mince words when it says, "Do not join a crowd that intends to do evil. When you are in the witness stand, do not be swayed by the opinion of the majority" (Ex. 23:2). Caleb took those words from the Law of Moses pretty seriously it seems. Otherwise, these daring words would not have flowed from his mouth when he stood in the witness-stand with the entire nation of Israel watching him, following his crew's return from scouting the land of Canaan:

"Let's go at once to take the land. We can certainly conquer it!" This was in direct contradiction to the report given by the rest of the members of the spy crew. They all were unanimous in saying, "We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are! The land we explored will swallow up any who go to live there. All the people we saw were huge. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. We felt like grasshoppers next to them, and that is what we looked like to them!" (Num. 13:30-33). But Caleb refused to bow to the sheer peer pressure that would have been mounting on him to alter his report so that it too would sound negative like his colleagues! And mind you, Caleb was forty years old when this event happened – an extremely youthful age when you take into consideration that people lived for many hundreds of years in those times (Num. 14:6). Oh, for more Calebs in this crooked and depraved generation of young people! Calebs who will take God's command that we must not follow the crowd in doing wrong, come what may!

What do we do when our buddies burden us to do things that our Master won't have us do? Clueless? Got no answers? Well in God's Word, we certainly have some clues and answers to this perennial problem of youth. Want to hear them?

1. MAKE!

Making Jesus as our best pal ever is the best defense against the lures of Peer Pressure! Wondering how? Take a good look at Peter and you get to know. See Peter closely and this lesson will sink into your system. There were times when Peter and Jesus were close and cozy. Peter knew that it was a foregone conclusion that Jesus was going to be forced to carry the cross and he would finally be crucified on it. So, in his heart he too decided that he would "deny himself and take up his cross" and follow His Master just as His Master taught them to (Mk. 8:34). That was why – I suppose – he flatly said, "Lord, I am ready to go to prison with you, and even to die with you!" when Jesus predicted that one of the twelve disciples would betray him (Luke 22:33). He felt that close

and committed to Jesus. But then as we pretty well know Peter ended up denying Jesus. Three times out. What went wrong? Simple. Mathew records that when Peter was following Jesus, he was following him from "far behind" after his arrest (Matt. 26:58). Mathew – I believe meant more than a geographical distance. He meant there was a spiritual distance between Jesus and Peter. He was drifting away from a warm and wonderful relationship with his Master. Just 11 verses and a short while later, Peter ended up denying Jesus (Matt. 26:69-75). This was the message that crystallized in my heart as I kept reading Matthew 26:58-75: "If you follow Jesus from a distance you would soon end up doing things that would displease him." If only Peter had maintained his closeness with his Master, he would have withstood the pressure put on him as he sat in the courtyard with those who were not clearly in sympathy with Jesus. From the way they eyed him suspiciously, Peter knew he would be in trouble if he admitted that he was indeed Jesus' most outspoken disciple. Peter was

hanging out with a crowd hostile to Jesus without being close to Jesus. A potentially deadly combination that ultimately bust Peter's spiritual fuse and rocked his commitment to Christ. The result was predictable: he ended up swearing that he did not know the Man who in his very first recorded sentence to Peter in Mathew's Gospel told Peter to make him known ("Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how to fish for people!" – Mathew 4:19).

Have you made Jesus your best friend as yet? Well, if there is anyone who can be called "a Friend who sticks closer than a brother," it's got to be Jesus (Prov. 18:24). Only sin will increase the distance between Him and you (Isa. 59:2). And if you ask Him to forgive your sins and stick close to him, the pressure from your pals to do things that displease Him will dwindle away, I bet. How do we get close to Jesus? By spending lots of time with him. By lapping up His Word hungrily. By taking the deliberate time-off from our busy worlds and standing still in

his presence to have heart-to-heart talks with Him. If we inculcate this habit of constantly enjoying a close walk with our Maker, there will come a point in our life when we automatically say what the Psalmist said, "One day spent in your house, this beautiful place of worship beats thousands spent on Greek island beaches. I'd rather scrub floors in the house of my God than be honored as a guest in the palace of sin!" (Psa. 84:10, MSG). Yes, it is living in his presence day in and day out that defuses the pressure on us to dwell in the "tents of the wicked" (Psa 84:10, KJV).

In summary, if you *fall in love* with Jesus chances are that you will not fall in line with the lousy ways of your filthy friends!

2. BREAK!

In order to escape the deadly effects peer pressure can have on our lives, there are some friendships (actually fellowships) we must break. That is right – destroy outrightly! But I can almost hear you arguing, "But even Jesus was called as a 'friend of sinners!' – wasn't he? "

Of course, he was! But his closest pals were never the cheating tax-collectors and the captivating prostitutes but Peter, James and John – three men who left their all to follow Him and later would not hesitate to die for Him! Jesus tried to lift the sinners to His level in the times He spent with them – He never stooped to their level. His goal of mixing with them freely was to evangelize them and not let his morals be eroded by them! Also, we must note that He reserved his thick friendship only for His disciples. In fact, he met them "often" in an olive grove – something He did not do with his "sinner" friends (John 18:2). Following the model of Jesus, we can have a circumspect friendship with our unbeliever pals without having close fellowship (while reserving that with friends who closely walk with the Lord)! He by His personal example and model, teaches us to say "No" to friends who call us for "ungodliness" thereby helping us to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:11,12).

Ask Rehoboam why he brushed aside the sensible advice to ease

the great pressure his father Solomon put on the people of Israel. He would talk about another kind of pressure – peer pressure. His youthful buddies boosted his ego and tutored him to reply to a delegation that had come to meet him in this harsh manner: "My little finger is thicker than my father's waist – if you think he was hard on you, just wait and see what I'll be like! Yes, my father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!" (I Kings 12:1-14). This peer-pressure-inspired rude reply eventually led the split of Israel into two Kingdoms – we can say that.

Oh, how many times foul friends have lured many a Christ-following youth to sin? Countless times. What is the solution? It is to willfully sever yourself from friends who seduce you forget your devotion to Christ. That is what Paul has taught us to do. Paul warned that the Corinthian believers must steer clear of some folk who argued that one could just feast and get drunk – enjoy life to the full – the reason being that "tomorrow we die"

(and there was no resurrection from the dead and judgement before God to panic about – I Cor. 15:32). He plainly wrote, "Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for 'bad company corrupts good character.' Come back to your senses and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don't even know God" (I Cor. 15:33-34). One version of the Bible renders that passage this way: "Don't let yourself be poisoned by this anti-resurrection loose talk." What Paul was teaching the Corinthians was in line with a present-day proverb that goes, "If you sleep with dogs you will get fleas!" Jesus would agree with Paul's suggestion that we should cut ourselves from corrupting chums for he said, "Even if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out..." (Matt. 5:29). What was Jesus getting at? It is probably this: "Your friend may be as dear to you as your eye. But cut your relationship with him if he causes you to sin against me!" (The imagery of "eyes" being compared to people is very much in the Bibles – See Dt. 32:10, Psa. 17:8 and Zech. 2:8). Your buddies may seem to you as the apple of

your eyes. But if what they say is against what God says, you must steer clear of them because we are told to "guard" the Lord's teachings which are to be the "apple of our eyes" (Prov. 7:2).

In short, one sure way of sending peer pressure packing is to pack off our persistently perverted pals!

3. CONTEMPLATE!

When young people give in to peer pressure, they feel good for the moment. In fact, Jesus himself said, "If you lived on the world's terms, the world would love you as one of its own..." (John 15:19). But even some of the worldliest people will tell you that the warmth the world showers on you will be at best temporary. For example, famous American actress Marilyn Monroe once said, in an interview given at the far end of her life: "Fame doesn't fulfil you. It warms you a bit, BUT THAT WARMTH IS TEMPORARY!"

The story of the younger son – the prodigal son – which Jesus narrated is very familiar to us all. This son too was probably incited

by his friends to somehow parcel away his portion of his Pop's property. Armed with a lot of cash, he threw parties (for who else, but his comrades). But when he was low on cash, and it is quite possible his so-called friends left him. One day he was feeding his pals. Pretty soon he was feeding on what was given to the pigs! Sad story, indeed! Had he had contemplated on some of the proverbs of Solomon, which he must have surely had access to as a Jewish youngster, he would not have wrecked his life. He must have read these stirring words in Proverbs that directly warned him of fair-weather friends. He had no time to chew and act upon these well known Proverbs: "My child, if sinners entice you, turn your back on them!...Don't go along with them, my child!...The poor are despised even by their neighbors, while the rich have many 'friends' (meaning so-called friends who are not really friends)...Wealth makes many 'friends'; poverty drives them away..." (Prov. 1:10-15; 14:20; 19:4). In short, he missed the repeated message of Proverbs:

the very same friends who egg you on to commit a sin, may not hesitate to throw an egg on your face when you suffer as a result of your sin!

Quite often, we bump into characters in the Bible who were let down by their close friends. You cannot miss how hurt David was when you read this: "As for this friend of mine, he betrayed me; he broke his promises. His words are as smooth as cream, but his heart is war. His words are as soothing as lotion, but underneath are daggers!" (Psa. 55:20-21). Job (6:15-23) and Jeremiah (20:10) had similar experiences.

Go over these sob stories of those ditched by their bosom buddies at the time when they desperately needed them. Once you have done that – contemplated that - chances are that you will not be pressured by these very same people to let down "the Friend closer than a brother" – Jesus! Agree?

Apart from his family (seven of them) no one took seriously Noah's preaching that there

would be a flood seriously. I am sure there were quite a few to make jokes about this judgment-preacher (II Pet 2:5). Some probably told Noah, "Look at those short pants! Hey Noah, expecting a flood?" Sure, these sort of jokes must have put pressure on Noah to quit. But he did not quit. He kept doing what God wanted him to do. Faithfully.

Nehemiah was busy rebuilding the broken walls of Jerusalem. It was then that he heard this acidic remark from Tobiah: "That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked on top of it!" (Neh 4:3). Would Nehemiah yield to this pressure that was put on him to quit doing what God called him to do? By no means. The wall rebuilding project was completed (Neh 6:15).

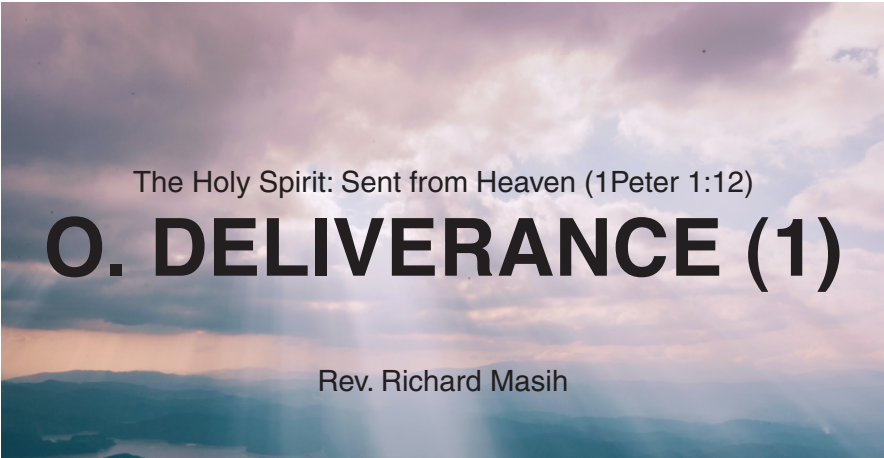
Like Noah and Nehemiah did, it is my prayer that you would withstand peer *pressure* to complete what God has called you to do and consequently enjoy the divine *pleasure* in your life.

Well, peer pressure can be handled perfectly well only if you will draft into your life these

simple, Scriptural and pragmatic steps. You can count on it!



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The Holy Spirit: Sent from Heaven (1Peter 1:12)

O. DELIVERANCE (1)

Rev. Richard Masih

What we mean by deliverance is neither a political deliverance, nor a social deliverance, nor a financial deliverance but spiritual deliverance from Demonic possession. There are several instances of Demon's Possessions in the New Testament. Firstly, we have the example of Mary Magdalene out of whom our Lord had cast our seven evil demons. We read in Mark 16:9, "Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons." We read similarly in Luke 8:2, "And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been

healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means." We do not know how she got possessed with seven demons? How did it affect her life? How and when our Lord had cast out seven demons from her? But there was certainly a drastic change in her after her deliverance. We find her in the group of women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities. These women travelled with our Lord and out of

gratefulness to him, they provided for our Lord out of their personal means.

Then, we have the case of two demon-possessed men who came out of the tombs when they met our Lord (Matthew 8:28-34). They were "so fierce that no one could pass that way". And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region." Several things could be observed here: 1. The

demons recognized our Lord; 2. The demons knew that at a set time they will be tortured (in hell); 3. They sought our Lord's permission to go into the pigs; 4. The demons only destroy wherever they are found; 4. The city people were more concerned with their financial loss over the pigs than they were happy with the deliverance of the two men or the presence of the Lord in their midst. In fact, they asked him to leave their region. Who were more dangerous- the Lord or the demons? But foolishly, they chose demons.

In Mark 5:1:17, we have one man in a very pathetic condition: 1. He is possessed with Legions of demons (Mark 5:9); 2. He would not wear clothes (Luke 8:27). 3. He lived among the tombs, not in the house (Mark 5:3); 4. No one could bind him anymore, even with a chain (v.3,4); 5. No one had strength to subdue him (Mark 5:4); 5. Night and day, he was crying and hurting himself with stones (Mark 5:5); He too was drastically delivered by our Lord. There were three distinct

changes in him: 1. When the city people came they saw him the man sitting at Jesus' feet, no more driven by the demons (Luke 35); 2. He was clothed, no more going around naked (Mark 5:15); 3. He was in his right mind (Mark 5:5). Here too, two thousand pigs were drowned. Here too, our Lord had to leave the place. But here, the man wanted to be with our Lord. But our Lord sent him home with the instruction to be a witness there (Mark 5:1). He obeyed the Lord and became a witness for him (Mark 5:20). Are these events, recoded in Matthew 8:28-34 and Mark 5:1-17, two different events or one event with the slight difference of being two men in Matthew and one man in Mark? Is one of them shortened version and the other longer one?

Then, we have the incident of one demon possessed man who was made dumb by the demon who had possessed him. "As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast

out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel" (Matthew 9:33). Then, we have another incident in Matthew 12:22, "Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" In Mark 9:17-27, we have the heart-breaking story of a boy and his disparate father. The spirit had made the boy deaf and mute and tried to destroy him in fire and water. When our Lord commanded the spirit, the boy became free from demonic possession. Then, we have the incident of a woman who was bound by Satan for eighteen long years and made a cripple (Luke 13:10-13). She was bent and could not straighten up.

How did our Lord cast out the demons?

First, he could cast them out because of the anointing of God. Peter testified in the house of Cornelius, "...how God anointed

Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). It is said about our Lord how "...he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. So, his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan" (Matthew 4:23-27).

Second, he could cast them out by the Spirit of God. We read in Matthew 12:28, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." It was so because he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. We read,

"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country" (Luke 4:14).

Third, he could cast out demons by the finger of God. We read, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). The finger of God stands for the power of God. Cf. "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place" (Psalm 8:3). The magicians confessed to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19).

Fourth, he could cast out demons by the word of God. "That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick" (Matthew 8:16). He did not have to jump up and down, resort to loud shouts, gimmicks and antics. He did not have to do any drama or beat the sufferer with a heavy Bible (or its equivalent in his days) or slap hard and ask, "From

where you have come? Who has sent you?", etc., etc. This is what some of the modern exorcists do. One word from his lips was enough to make the demons and diseases run head over heels. The Centurion expressed his faith that one word from the lips of our Lord was enough to heal his servant. "The centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed."

If the Lord has called us to deliver people from their demonic possession, then we need to be strong in these areas- 1. The anointing of God; 2. The Spirit of God; 3. The finger of God; 4. The word of God. We need to take precaution of ourselves and our families, lest we might be attacked like the seven sons of Sceva. "Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit

answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:14-16). (to be continued...)



Rev. Richard Masih

is residing in Patalpani, M.P. He studied theology in All Nations Christian College, England. He served the Lord for 40 years with the Union of Evangelical Students of India and also authored several books in English. He is available for the ministry of the word in Hindi and English on invitation. He can be reached at Mobile: 9958747748 and richardmasih@gmail.com.

A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born for a time of adversity.
Proverbs 17:17



CHRISTIAN SONS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

Kerala boasts the tagline "God's Own Country". In this so-called divine place, one particular law of the land is broken regularly, and according to a World Bank blog, Christians are in the lead.

Dowry has been illegal since 1961, but it still exists under different names. The World Bank blog says:

...dowry is not just a Hindu phenomenon in India. Average net dowry in Muslim marriages is only slightly lower than among Hindus and has remained stable through the study period. In contrast, Christians and Sikhs exhibit a striking increase in dowry over the same period, leading to higher average dowries than Hindus and

Muslims...Kerala exhibits stark and persistent dowry inflation since the 1970s and has the highest average dowry in recent years. Other states with inflationary trends are Haryana, Punjab, and Gujarat. Given Kerala's religious composition—26% Muslims, 18% Christians, and 55% Hindus—this trend is compatible with the differential trends by religion described earlier.

Praveena Kodoth, Professor of Gender, Human Development and Migration at the Centre for Development Studies in Trivandrum, says that dowry became a basis of match making in southern and central Kerala in the second half of the 20th

century. She also said, "Among Christians, dowry is a deeply entrenched customary practice. There was the practice of paying a 'tithe' – a share of the dowry to the church — but when dowry amounts grew, people started declaring much less than they were paying; so now I believe the church has changed its rule – the church has classified families according to their economic status and demands payment according to that." Yes, it was because the churches of Kerala were getting a percentage of the dowries, that they failed to speak out against dowries.

Some Cases

- A seminary student's marriage was being arranged. The girl had a college education just like the guy, except that he also had a seminary education. The girl's family on their own said that they would give her the entire provident fund left by her deceased father. Before things were finalized, the student came with a letter from his father "demanding" more dowry. The father wrote that they had greater expectations for their son. As a
- person going into ministry on a small salary his prospects were not great, and so the father's expectations were ill-founded. Anyway, the issue was that this divinity student just didn't have the moral guts to stand up to his father and say that he could not agree to this because it went against everything that the Bible taught. When his seminary mates got wind that he was taking a dowry, they asked him how he could do that. He had no answer, and a friend had to come to his rescue, by saying that the girl's family was giving their daughter her rightful share in the family's limited wealth, and that that was biblical.
- A young Malayalee evangelist, son of a big-time evangelical leader, fell in love with a non-Malayalee girl, the daughter of a bishop. The boy's father objected to the marriage because he could not expect his son to bring in a big fat dowry from this non-Malayalee alliance as would happen if he married a Malayalee girl. The girl's community didn't give big

dowries like the Syrian Christians of Kerala. The girl however had a teaching job in a university and was earning a much bigger salary than the boy who was on a youth evangelist's low pay. That didn't count with the boy's father. He wanted a big dowry. Thankfully, his son had the courage of conviction to go against his father and get married to the girl.

- Parents gave their daughter a dowry, but the groom's family used it to marry off two of their daughters. The family belonged to an ultra-conservative denomination that boasts about being biblical in belief and practice. But when it came to taking a dowry, the Bible was set aside.

Today, the ways in which dowry demands are made has changed. In this day of sophistication, one doesn't have to be crude about it. Some families are past masters at it. They get a marriage broker or distant relatives or friends to talk about *mattu kaaryangal* (other things) – a term used to subtly talk about dowry.

The amount of dowry depends on the groom's economic status – whether he has a high-paying job, family wealth, etc. Greater the income and assets, greater the expectations are. How much dowry close relatives have received or given also matters. It is a 'prestige issue'. The amount of dowry received or given will reflect on the family's standing in their circle of family and friends. "What will people think, if our son gets less than so and so? What will people think of our daughter, if we give less than so and so?" The Bible clearly says that we are not to love the world, and all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life – because it goes against loving the Father (1 Jn. 2:15-17)

The Bible on Dowry

There's nothing in the Bible about dowries. Instead, the Bible talks of a man paying a bride price when he wants to get married (Ex 22:17; Dt.22:29). So if we are going to take a cue from the Bible, then it is on the side of a man paying a bride price and not in favour of taking a dowry.

The word "dowry" actually

signifies what parents give their daughters. While a man (or his family) may choose someone who has a large dowry, in reality it is not given to the husband as such and definitely not to his family. In the sense of the dowry being what the girl receives from her family, the Bible supports it.

When Israel was taking possession of the Promised Land, there were five daughters of a man who had died during the journey. The man Zelophehad had only daughters, and no sons. The daughters then appealed that their father's name should not be extinguished simply because he had no sons. The ruling given on that appeal was that Zelophehad's daughters should receive what would have been given to sons if Zelophehad had had sons. It became the law in Israel, that where there was no male descendant, a daughter would inherit what was her father's (Num 27:1-7).

No doubt daughters would not have received anything of the family inheritance where there were sons. That was because it had to do with ancestry and succession. That is why

Zelophehad's daughters were required to marry within their own tribe. They were prohibited from marrying outside the tribe so that the wealth of one tribe was not added to the wealth of another tribe. This rule of not adding a tribe's wealth to that of another, goes against the way dowry takes wealth from the girls' families and adds it to the wealth of men's families. That is just not right according to biblical teaching.

This episode in Israel's history established, that in principle women could take the place of men. The underlying doctrine was the equality of the sexes. The practice of dowry as something to be given to grooms and their families is therefore, essentially a denial of that equality.

A girl has a right to an equal share with her brother(s). Her share is hers, though. It is not for the groom or his family to confiscate and use for their pleasure or serve their own purpose. A bride may, of course, freely share what she has with her husband, but then he too must share what is his with her. It is all about treating her as an equal – a partner.

Unequal Yardsticks

Families that demand dowries for their young men justify it by claiming to have spent so much on their sons' education. Since these families are not choosing uneducated brides for their sons, that is plainly not a valid argument.

When a girl marries, she leaves her family and takes all that her parents spent on her and adds it to her husband's assets. In the case of girls, they also bring all the skills in cooking, cleaning and home management that they learnt from their mothers. On the whole, they do bring more to their marriages than men.

Isn't it funny how the rules we apply in dealing with our daughters-in-law are not the ones we want for our own daughters. We want our prospective sons-in-law to have the moral courage to take a stand against dowries, treat our daughters with fairness and kindness and assert their independence from their parents, just as the Bible says that a man should leave his parents and cling to his wife. But, we want our own sons to meekly obey us in

the matter of letting the parents demand big dowries. If our sons turn abusive with a view to extracting more dowry, and are not kind and fair to our daughters-in-law, we proudly assert that our sons are just being manly.

While in school or college, youth passionately take a stand against dowry. They make speeches, stage plays and write essays condemning the practice. But when it is time to get married, they hide behind the claim that it is something their parents want and they just cannot disobey their parents.

Culture Against God

Very often bad customs and practices are covered over by an appeal to culture: "We are Indians. Our culture is not Western. This is the way things are done according to Indian culture."

We have double standards about cultural practices. We do embrace whatever we think is modern or stylish. Except for rural folks, most men have switched to Western-style clothes. We go ethnic only to appear fashionable at weddings or similar occasions.

Girls and women do both Indian and Western. And when it comes to toilets, most of us prefer to go the Western route. Once upon a time, crossing kaala pani (black water, i.e., the seas) to go to foreign lands was taboo. Now, everybody wants to find jobs in phoren lands. Yes, when it suits us, we reject our cultures for not being modern.

It is utter nonsense to dismiss what the Bible teaches as belonging to Western culture. If anything, the culture of the Bible is Asian. Its teachings are not based on Western cultures and lifestyles. However, as the Word of God, the Bible is not defined or restricted by any culture. The Word comes to us from heaven, calling us to be citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20).

In the time when Jesus walked this earth, the Pharisees advocated disobedience to the clear commandments of God for

the sake of their cultural practices – and it is to be noted that they did it for profit (Mk. 7:6-13). When we today set aside what God has revealed to us in His Word, we are being Pharisees, pretending allegiance to God, but our hearts are far from Him.

In the end, dowry demands boil down to plain old greed and/or "pride of life". Both greed and pride are sins that grieve our God. And so, the bottom line is: dowry as it is practised is a sin. Nothing less.



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THE REED- A story of roots

Ms. Vahneinem Haokip

The Reed that was on top of the terrace near the tank, has somehow given me a lesson to learn.

(For a better visual, in the later years, if I forget or if we move out this place).

Yeah, around that white-or-cream-house-thingy-roof-part.
The reed.

Sounds good too.

During March or February 2020, there was rain. Yeah, the mornings, the nights it rained a lot at that time, and I saw this very pretty reed, it was the type you see in Egyptian movies this kind of thing.



But the Reed kept bending and turning and flying wherever the wind blew, yet, it didn't uproot. Yeah, well, kinda did later, but for those two months, it was strong.

It stayed strong. And I realised the importance of making or having your roots strong. Roots can well signify anything, the foundational base of concepts in studying, the foundational base of Christian life, GOD Himself is a Root. He's

the best Root we can have a firm one on, to *not be swayed by the world*.

Now, I do get that the Reed was tossing and turning but, maybe the wind signified the troubles and problems of life. The wind was the world, who knows. The wind was the temptation. The wind was the feeling. The wind was *anything in my life that swayed me*.

That made me feel as if I wanted to fly along with it. Coming to the next point - Fly. Don't fly. The Reed, if it had given in, would have flown, but it didn't.

It stood firm to the foundation it was standing on. It was on the top. Yes, the highest place and proudly it can say, "I've fought the good fight (with the wind) and I've finished the race (when it withered and died- but that date awaits all of us)".

If it had flown, it knew that the height would've been momentary, and the next thing was complete destruction. It would've tumbled down on the ground and landed on the roads

where it can wither before it's time.

It's beautiful how it can teach us or maybe just me this important thing, to know your roots. The root, which root do you have? Are you rooted on the highest place which signifies God (to me) or are you choosing to be swayed by the wind, choosing the momentary pleasure of flying yet with a long-term destruction awaiting after the flight.



Ms. Vahneinem Haokip

is currently studying in tenth standard at Mount Carmel School, Dwarka, New Delhi. She was born again at the age of 5 years and took baptism at the age of 12 years. Vahneinem lives with her two siblings and parents who are pastoring in New Delhi. She also owned a YouTube channel namely VNN NEWS where she speaks on different topics of the world or national issues.



"Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe," (1 Timothy 4:12 New American Standard Bible).

This is the toughest verse to follow, yet it is the most essential for a godly or Christian life. Anyone of us doesn't have any exception because it is a command. We must keep in the mind that this is not optional, but it is compulsory for every Christian youth. We can go beyond the boundaries of Christendom and say, that it morally applies for all youths including non-Christians but now, let's be in Saint Paul's

intention and try to understand that what he means by his words. These words have an enormous weight because the writer of these words was "an example of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:12 New American Standard Bible). He was dare enough to say openly and publicly, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1 New International Version). No doubt, that Saint Paul was "an example" and because of that even after 2000 years, his words apply to us and above all, his words are God's word for whole humanity. Today, my heart breaks when I hear Christian youth speaking vulgar language. Are we "an example" in "speech?" (1

Timothy 4:12 New American Standard Bible). Immoral behavior of believers is being justified with arguments in the name of so-called modernity. Are we "an example" in "conduct" as Saint Paul demanded of us? (1 Timothy 4:12 New American Standard Bible). Do we "love" people or our hearts are hardened and become merciless even if we see people in need (1 Timothy 4:12 New American Standard Bible). What is the level of our "faith" and are we people of "purity?" We know that Saint Paul had all these characteristics and expected from his beloved son Timothy to follow his footsteps. It is very important to notice that even his contemporaries or seniors were appreciating him (2 Peter 3:14-15 New International Version). Let me quote Saint Peter's exact words- "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. Bear in mind that our Lord's

patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him" (2 Peter 3:14-15 New International Version). Now, what is our excuse? If his senior or contemporary has that much seriousness towards his words, how much more we need to be serious? May the Lord have mercy on us and give us the heart to become "an example" in this corrupt era (1 Timothy 4:12 New American Standard Bible).



Rev. Hasti Nazari

The author has completed his M.A. Theology from the University of Mysore and M.A. Advance Missiology from SAIACS. He is an ordained Priest by CEFI Diocese and serves as the lecturer of missiology and cultural anthropology.

Many are the afflictions of the
righteous: but the Lord delivereth him
out of them all.

Psalms 34:19

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY COMMISSION OF
THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF INDIA

HALF YEARLY REPORT

January-June 2021



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JANUARY - JUNE 2021

Before the year 2021 had reached its halfway mark, some of the most powerful forces in modern India prepared to counter the Christian - and Muslim - presence in India, with discussions and statements on how to rid the country of "padri" [Hindi of the Latin Padre, father or Christian priest, pastor or clergy], pushing a massive 145 incidents of religious persecution against Christians, including three murders, into the background. That the incidents, and the threats, took place even as the country, still reeling from the impact of the first wave of the Corona Virus pandemic, was struck anew by the second wave, which struck the country, particularly the metropolitan cities including the national capital New Delhi, the worst hit.

In the hill town of Chitrakoot on the border of the states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, held holy according to the epic Ramayana, the top echelons of the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh [RSS],

the ideological mother of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the main grassroots force behind the government of the Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, met in a secret conclave. The main agenda, according to the authoritative Hindi newspaper and TV group Dainik Bhaskar, was to launch a campaign with the slogan "Chadar aur Father Mukht Bharat" (An India liberated from Chadar (Cloth Sheet symbolizing Muslims) and Father (Christian Priests)).

The threat of such campaigns has accompanied promises — or threats - of bringing in legislation in Parliament against conversion. One such Bill listed in Parliament is moved by RSS spokesman and member of the Upper House [Rajya Sabha] Mr Rakesh Sinha. Indeed, as reported by other news outlets, one of the other things that the Sangh spoke about was to propose to the Modi government to bring a nationwide anti-conversion law.

The violence, detailed in the report, itself was vicious, widespread and ranged from murder to attacks on church, false cases, police immunity and

connivance, and the now normalised social exclusion or boycott which is becoming viral.

An analysis of the 145 cases recorded by the Evangelical Fellowship of India's Religious Liberty Commission and its associate Helplines and activists, documents three murders, attacks or desertion of 22 churches / places of worship, and 20 cases of ostracization or social boycott in rural areas of families which had refused to renege on their Christian faith and had stood up to mobs and political leaders of the local majority community.

True to the pattern of previous years, Madhya Pradesh topped the list with 30 cases. The state, which has large pockets of forest lands where Adivasis, or Tribals live, was amongst the earliest to enact anti-conversion laws, which it has periodically applied on the ground with increasing viciousness. The neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh, continued to be a dangerous place for Christians too with 22 cases. Karnataka and Chhattisgarh, also polarised by a decade of religiously divisive political

campaigns, documented 14 and 13 cases each.

Violence against Christians by non-state actors in India stems from an environment of targeted hate. The translation of the hate into violence is sparked by a sense of impunity generated in India's administrative apparatus.

COVID-19, which has severely impacted data collection, grassroots investigations and even a measure of solidarity with victims in distant villages, seems to have given the police a ruse not to register cases – police have generally been loath to register cases. Access to courts for relief was restricted too. The violence was also facilitated by the absence of civil society on streets as activists were unable to travel because of lockdowns restrictions and because of the collapse of the media.

The most alarming development has been the expansion and scope of the notorious Freedom of Religion Acts, which are popularly known as the anti-conversion laws, earlier enforced in 7 states, to more states ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Once targeting only Christians,

they are now armed also against Muslims in the guise of curbing 'Love Jihad'. This is an Islamophobic term coined some years ago to demonise marriages between Muslim men and non-Muslim women, particularly those belonging to the Hindu upper castes. The laws ostensibly punish forced or fraudulent religious conversions. But in practice, they are used to criminalise all conversions, especially in non-urban settings.

Uttar Pradesh has become the eighth state in India to enforce an anti-conversion law. Similar laws are in force in the states of Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. The states of Arunachal Pradesh and Rajasthan have passed anti-conversion laws that are not in force for various reasons, and Tamil Nadu has passed and repealed its anti-conversion law. Christian activists fear that the expanding footprint of the anti-conversion laws bring a step closer the BJP's manifesto promising a nation-wide law to check evangelisation by

"missionaries", a term designed to impute western conspiracy to Christianise Dalits, Tribals and others in rural areas, small towns and urban slums.

The most bizarre incident which caught the eyes of the international media took place on 19 March 2021 in Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, when four nuns from the Delhi Province of the Sacred Heart Society (SH) were arrested while on their way to Odisha from Delhi. The incident occurred while the train in which they were traveling stopped at 6.30 pm at Jhansi railway station. A group of religious extremists, who were returning from a pilgrimage, unjustifiably accused them of religious conversion and caused trouble. They challenged the faith of the women and raised religious slogans. Subsequently police arrived at the spot and arrested the women without paying any heed to their side of the story. Around 150 religious radicals accompanied the women in procession to the police station. The terrified nuns were released at 11.30 pm after the intervention from advocacy groups convinced police that the nuns were

innocent and had credible documents to prove their story.

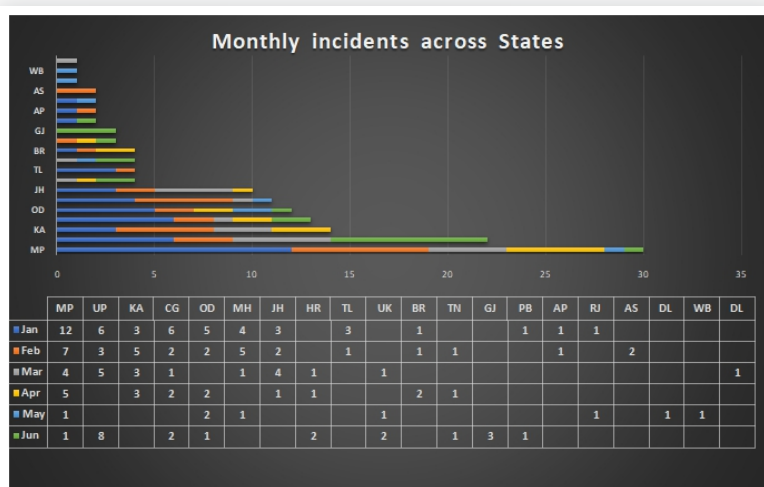
There was perhaps some consolation for religious minorities in recent pronouncements by various courts of law in the land. A Haryana court held that "hate speech is violence," as other courts said reiterated that the health of the Indian democracy depended much on the health of its minorities. Helping the judicial sentiment was the national outrage over the custodial death

of Jesuit priest and social activist Fr Stan Swami who'd been detained under the stringent Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in which the arrested can be held for long periods without bail pending trial which may begin years later.

Responding to several writ petitions, the Supreme Court of India has agreed to examine the constitutional validity of laws enacted by Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand but has said that the laws need to be first challenged in the respective high courts.

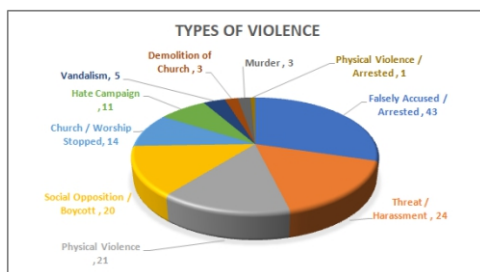
MONTH OF INCIDENTS ACROSS MONTHS

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Total
MP	12	7	4	5	1	1	30
UP	6	3	5			8	22
KA	3	5	3	3			14
CG	6	2	1	2		2	13
OD	5	2		2	2	1	12
MH	4	5	1		1		11
JH	3	2	4	1			10
HR			1	1		2	4
TL	3	1					4
UK			1		1	2	4
BR	1	1		2			4
TN		1		1		1	3
GJ						3	3
PB	1					1	2
AP	1	1					2
RJ	1				1		2
AS		2					2
DL					1		1
WB					1		1
DL			1				1
Grand Total	46	32	21	17	8	21	145



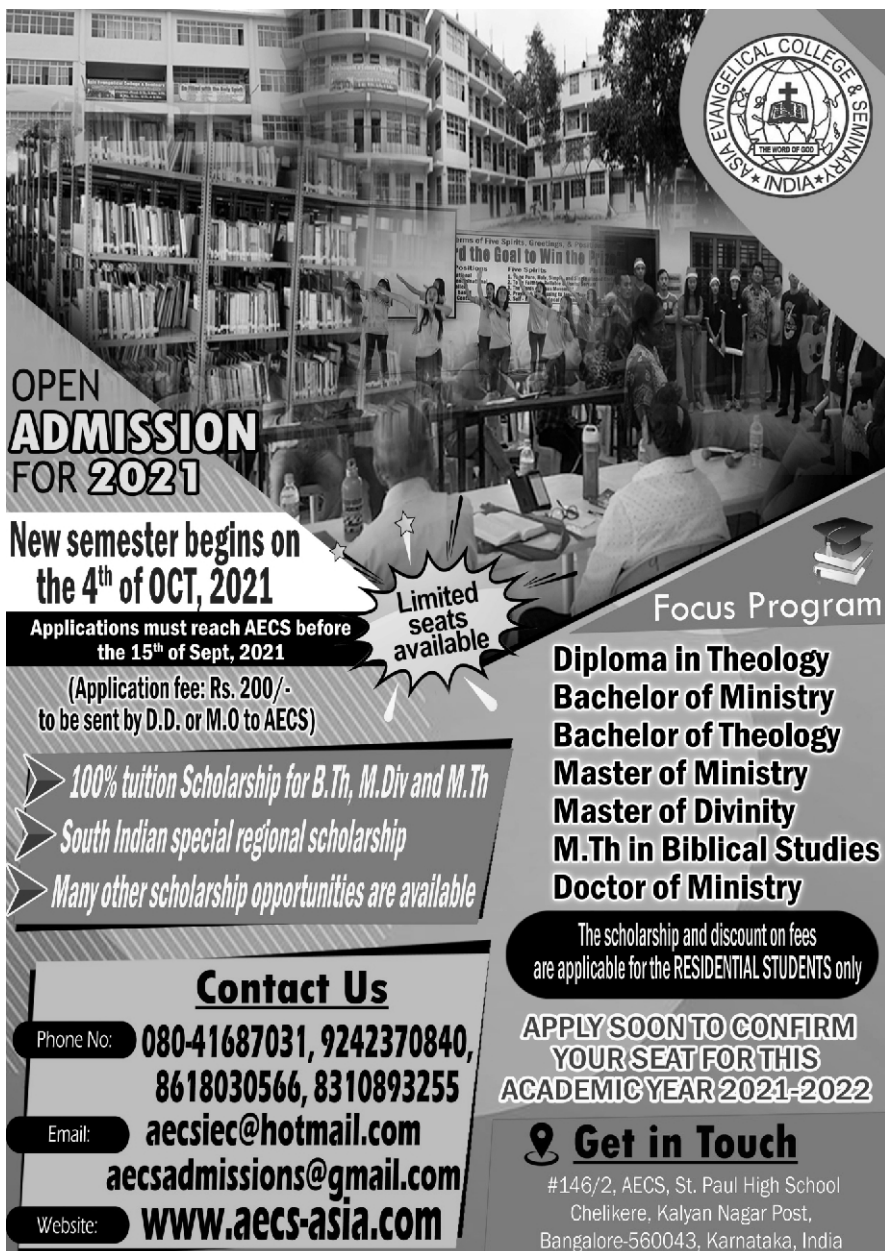
TYPES OF VIOLENCE


Type of incidents	# of incidents
Falsely Accused / Arrested	43
Threat / Harassment	24
Physical Violence	21
Social Opposition / Boycott	20
Church / Worship Stopped	14
Hate Campaign	11
Vandalism	5
Demolition of Church	3
Murder	3
Physical Violence / Arrested	1
Grand Total	145



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Note: The ARRC (Advanced Institute for Research on Religion and Culture) is a joint programme of ACTC, CIT and HMI, Hyderabad (Affiliated to Senate of Serampore College) offering **M.Th in Religions** (Hinduism & Islam).

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Intercessory *Prayer* Points



August 2021

1 SUNDAY International Friendship Day. Thank God for the new month. Thank God for your friends who stick with you through thick and thin. Thank Jesus for being a steadfast friend throughout. Pray for His continued provision and protection. Pray also that you will be dependent on God and not be self-sufficient.

2 MONDAY Pray for Union Biblical Seminary that the Lord would continue to use it to train and equip many young leaders for the extension of His kingdom. Pray also that nothing would hinder God's desire and will for this establishment.

3 TUESDAY Pray for Missionary Upholders Trust at Tamil Nadu. Thank and praise God for leading them thus far. May God be glorified through this thanksgiving celebration.

4 WEDNESDAY Pray for Jesus Calls ministry in Chennai. Jesus Calls is a ministry dedicated to pray for the broken hearted people irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Pray for deep understanding and compassion for the needs of people.

5 THURSDAY Continue to pray for the ministry of North East Centre for Training and Research (NECTAR), Shillong, Meghalaya. Pray that they would train many leaders who would bring change into people's lives.

6 FRIDAY Continue to pray for children who are vulnerable especially to human trafficking. Pray that God would build a hedge around them and supernaturally protect them.

7 SATURDAY Let us pray for the Senior Citizens in our country. Pray for accessible and affordable medical facilities. Pray for safety, protection and lots of love and healthy environment for them. Pray also for those who care for them.

8 SUNDAY Pray for Churches in rural places that cannot meet due to Covid19 lockdown. Pray that the Church leaders would find ways to meet the need of their congregation. Pray that God's Spirit would move hearts and minds of people and renew them.

9 MONDAY Pray for the Holy Spirit's protection, comfort and

empowerment for those persecuted because of their faith in Christ. Pray that they may come out victorious and gain strength from God as they walk their faith journey.

10 TUESDAY Continue to pray for the finances of EFI. Pray that the Lord would bless and continue to use it as His instrument for change and growth for the Church in India.

11 WEDNESDAY Continue to pray that God would remove Covid19 pandemic soon and restore people's lives. Pray also that our sufferings during this pandemic would not go waste but would bring good and greater glory to God.

12 THURSDAY International Youth Day. Pray that the youth of our nation would find hope and strength in God during this uncertain time. Pray for those who are working among the youth group that they would understand and empathize and have the ability to deliver the needed message of love, hope and strength to them.

13 FRIDAY Pray for the staff of EFI in different parts of India. Pray for God's anointing upon them so that they may effectively serve Him. Pray for the ministry of EFI and the financial needs so that the God would accomplish His plans and purposes through EFI.

14 SATURDAY Pray for the teaching and learning of God's Word in your church. Pray that the Holy Spirit may teach the audience and many lives

may be impacted. Pray that God may remove Biblical illiteracy.

15 SUNDAY Indian Independence Day. Thank God for the freedom fighters who have sacrificed their lives for our freedom. Pray for freedom for every citizen in our country in every aspect of their lives. Pray for deliverance for those who are in physical and spiritual bondage. May God help us to experience His freedom in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Pray that the Churches would worship today with gratitude for the freedom of religion that we enjoy in our country.

16 MONDAY Continue to pray for our nation persistently. Pray that all in leadership position would be a faithful and caring guardian of the constitution as well the people.

17 TUESDAY Thank God for the AIM magazine writers who are investing their time and energy every month. Pray for them that their services to the Lord would bring change and growth in the body of Christ. Pray for some who are struggling with health issues that God would bring healing and restoration.

18 WEDNESDAY Ask God for the boldness and courage to share the Gospel with your friends. Pray for your friends so that they may have eternal life in Christ Jesus.

19 THURSDAY World Humanitarian

Day. Praise God for the compassion and bravery of humanitarian workers in India and around the world. Let us also pray for international cooperation to meet the needs of humanitarian work around the world.

20 FRIDAY Pray for children from broken homes that they would find security in Christ. Pray that Jesus would meet their emotional and physical needs, heal them and bring them to complete restoration.

21 SATURDAY Amidst our struggles and problems, let us pray for His peace to prevail in our lives. Pray that God will give us a persevering heart and strength as we face our problems.

22 SUNDAY Pray for Churches that meet online. Pray that the Christian community would be encouraged and strengthened despite not being able to meet personally.

23 MONDAY Uplift people who are affected by hospitalization or death in the family due to Covid19 through prayer. Pray that their sufferings and grief would draw them closer to our loving God and trust in His perfect will and purposes.

24 TUESDAY Pray for inner strength for the women of India. Pray that they would know their rights and worth in Christ. Pray for equality in every field.

25 WEDNESDAY Pray for Dooars Evangelical Bethel Church Fellowship, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Pray for effective witnessing to reach the unreached people and planting

house churches in the interior parts of the Himalayan region including Madesh and Tarai belt.

26 THURSDAY Pray for the ministry of CASA-India at New Delhi. Church's Auxiliary for Social Action is a national development and humanitarian organization set up in 1947. Pray for Spirit-led decisions and actions to be made for the benefit of many people.

27 FRIDAY Let us pray and ask God for wisdom to handle the various situations that we are in. Let us only look up to the Lord and not rely on our own understanding or on others.

28 SATURDAY Pray for all the Life members of EFI. Thank God for their support in the ministry of EFI. Pray that they may be blessed by God in all the things that they do.

29 SUNDAY Pray for God's will to be done in your church, family, friend circle, community and in every part of our country. Pray for those who are spreading the message of love and peace that is in Christ Jesus.

30 MONDAY Pray for the political leaders of our country. Pray that they may be able to pursue and accomplish goals that would bring growth to the country and peace with neighbouring countries.

31 TUESDAY Thank God for his faithfulness throughout the month. Pray that the new month would bring more opportunity to bring Christ glory.

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IS THE NATION WHOSE
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Psalm 33:12

- HAPPY -

Independence Day



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