

The background of the entire cover is a collage of various photographs of people, likely persecuted Christians, rendered in a monochromatic orange-red color. The images are layered and partially obscured, creating a sense of depth and shared experience. The collage includes portraits of men and women of different ages and ethnicities, some looking directly at the camera, others in profile or looking down.

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF EFI PUBLICATION TRUST

aim

November 2021 ❖ PAGES 61 ❖ ₹ 20/-

A Journey of Faith

**IF ONE SUFFERS,
WE ALL SUFFER.**

**International Day of Prayer for
The Persecuted Church
2021**

Uniting in prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters



idop
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH 2021

IF ONE SUFFERS,
WE ALL SUFFER.



The Evangelical Fellowship of India
calls on churches in India to
observe the International Day of Prayer
for the Persecuted Church.

7th and 14th November 2021

BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED!

Uniting in prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters

A Journey of Faith

contents

Vol. 50 / No. 11
AIM Annual Subscription for
India, Nepal & Bhutan Rs. 200/-
(Other countries \$ 20)

A monthly publication of EFI Publication Trust

Editorial Rev. Vijayesh Lal04	International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church Rev. Abhishek John40
The News I Read Dr. Shantanu Dutta07	Prayer points for IDOP for the persecuted Churches in 202144
The Blessing Of The Lord Rev. Dr. David Mende11	Punjab, Karnataka mobilise to stop evangelical work Dr John Dayal46
Christian Unbelievers Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy14	The Curse Of The Law And The Blessings Of Abraham Rev. Richard Masih50
Responding to Persecution Biblically Rev. Vijayesh Lal20	Cancer's Here Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy55
Students, Shine Bright! Ms. Stuti Farmer27	Prayer65
Children's Day : What's so special? Mr. Hansraj Jain31	
Comfort My People Rev. Dr. Francis Sunderaraj35	

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Online payment details

Name : EFI Publication Trust | Bank : State Bank of India | Account No. **54015789597** | IFSC CODE: **SBIN0040415**
Branch : Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019

For subscription query call us: 011-26431133; Tele/Fax: 011-26285350, E-mail: aimatefi@gmail.com, website: www.efionline.org

THE TREASURER, EFI PUBLICATION TRUST, 805/92, Deepali, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110019.
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Rev. Vijayesh Lal

If one suffers, we all suffer

A call to pray for our sisters and brothers undergoing persecution.

"Please pray for us." This is one statement that I have heard time and time again from Christians who either were persecuted for their faith or were going through some very tough times because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Prayer was their number one and mostly the only request they ever made.

God says in Isaiah 45:3, *"And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness— secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name."* (NLT). God speaks of a treasure hidden in the darkness. The

persecuted and suffering, who walk with God, have a treasure for the rest of us, and when life does go dark, as it sometimes will, it is then that this treasure truly begins to glow.

I have had the privilege of serving the persecuted Church for the past 20 plus years. The persecuted body of Christ has taught me much about perseverance, forgiveness, reconciliation and living out the Gospel despite adversity and opposition. I have met Christians who have been undergoing persecution from diverse contexts and countries, of diverse

ethnicities, different levels of education and from diverse denominational backgrounds. But almost always a few constants have remained, like Joy, which is there predominantly and not lacking despite all the trouble, hardships, sickness, and imprisonment.

The persecuted seek prayer, not money. They value presence, not detached grants. They cherish when we pray with them and they love every voice that is raised with and for them. Nearly everyone I have met has thanked God for the experiences that they have been through and everyone has prayed for their persecutors.

And yet persecution remains a daily reality for over 100 million Christians around the world. Family and social pressure, imprisonment, disruption and vandalism of worship services, banning of the Bible and other Christian literature, physical violence, structural and systemic violence, gender violence, hate campaigns and even the taking away of life are some of the everyday occurrences that define

the daily reality of many Christian communities around the world today.

Some of the most oppressive nations where Christians are persecuted are North Korea, Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Libya, Eritrea and India.

In our relative comfort and prosperity, it is so easy to ignore our persecuted sisters and brothers and worse is to attribute motives and criticize them. The Word of God is categorical and tells us to share in their suffering. 1 Corinthians 12:26 clearly states, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it;"

If we are not moved by the pain and suffering of our family in Christ, there must be something wrong. If we do not identify with them or pray with them or speak out for and with them, then we deprive them of our solidarity and voice and deny our oneness in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, the International Days of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) are important. IDOPs are initiated by the World

Evangelical Alliance and promoted in India by the Evangelical Fellowship of India. The primary emphasis of IDOP is to mobilize intercessory prayer and citizen action on behalf of persecuted Christian communities. It is also a time to pray for the souls of the oppressors and the nations that promote persecution, and those who ignore it.

EFI calls to the Church in India to observe the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on the 7th and 14th November 2021. More information can be found on our website www.efionline.org

May I encourage you to engage with the persecuted, to pray with and for them, to speak out on their behalf and to help them. The Evangelical Fellowship of India

has been serving and strengthening the persecuted Body of Christ in India for many decades now. We serve as the voice of the Church in India that is a suffering Church as well as a serving Church.

The Religious Liberty Commission of EFI was formed for this very purpose. We invite you to join in this effort, first by joining in prayer this November through the observance of IDOP in your Church and then by your active participation with the EFI in serving the persecuted Body of Christ in India. Write to us at mail@efionline.org to know more.

God Bless You,

Rev. Vijayesh Lal
General Secretary
Evangelical Fellowship of India

For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying,
I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles,
that thou shouldest be for salvation
unto the ends of the earth.

Acts 13:47

The News I Read

Dr. Shantanu Dutta



17th of November is observed as National Journalism Day and this is a good time to remember those who are part of one of my favourite professions. When I was younger, I wanted to be a journalist, a radio journalist at that. But those were the days when parents encouraged their children to be either an engineer or a doctor or if one were to be an Arts student (considered to be more suited to girls though at the time !), one could try for the Civil Services exam. For some reason I have not researched, Engineering and Medicine were the aspirational careers. Not management, not even law - a bit surprising considering that so many of our freedom fighters and political leaders were trained as lawyers. But certainly not

journalism. It was considered a low paying career with uncertain prospects.

So, treading the well-trodden path, I became a doctor and dreams of being a journalist lay buried. Till one day, God opened my eyes to the joys of writing. I remember before a computer came my way, writing a short essay too was tedious as my handwriting was bad. The manuscript had to be typed double space by someone who knew typing and needed more than one correction as my writing was illegible even to the most gifted. I wasn't writing for anything huge ; I wasn't trained as a journalist and wasn't going to be one. But as I kept up the discipline, even in the small world

for which I wrote, there was a change. As I kept expressing my views, people listened. Some accepted my views, many did not. But over time, as attitudes, slowly changed over a range of things, I like to think that I was a tiny part of that change.

Journalism has come a long way since my student days, both in breadth and scope. Media and journalism have truly come into their own now as the fourth estate as they are often referred to. Investigative journalism and sting operations and the whole concept of speaking truth to power have unearthed lots of ugly truths and brought them to the public eye. The Nirbhaya case in Delhi, the exposes by Tehelka in its hey days, the ongoing Farmers's protest, the many tragedies associated with the Covid pandemic, the plight of migrant labour, stories of lynching and persecution from across the country, all these would have been drowned out but for the fearless truth telling of many journalists.

Of course, not journalists certainly. There is a term that has become very popular in the last few years that is godi media,

those who are the lapdogs of the rich and the powerful. The literal translation of the term is a bit awkward, but it will suffice to say that there are those who have sold their soul to the powers that be, to stay afloat and prosper or possibly for sheer survival. They cover stories of a certain kind - possibly exaggeratedly so and completely ignore another kind of story because it is inconvenient to do so.

Where are the Christians in this game? I don't know too many Christian journalists, but as a wannabe journalist, I follow closely the ones I do. Some very senior ones who are still fighting battles, though they could have hung up their boots and curled up before their TV sets. I am sure that there would be godi journalists among Christians too but the ones I admire are not among them.

What does it mean for Christians to live faithfully in the rapidly expanding new media frontier? How should they navigate a culture in which everything – the beheading of journalists by the Islamic State, the foibles of the flavor of the month celebrity, our own lives – has become a matter

of public consumption and entertainment? They can hardly stand above the fray, can we ? I can only say as a consumer of news that I am exposed to an immense sea of news, which decides about my political, industrial and social life, and influences even my own private and personal life much more than I want to realise or to admit. Technical developments in the area of the electronic transmission of news, modern mass-medias, will in the near future make this influence ubiquitous in a hardly imaginable way.

Christian journalists are watchmen charged with discerning the times and showing the challenges. Ezekiel 33 lays out the calling of those who watch for trouble: *"If [the watchman] sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head."* Ezekiel also warned about dereliction of duty: *"If the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are*

not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand."

Luke writes what may be termed as a job description of the long-term goal of a Christian journalist as he begins his gospel. *"just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."*

The Gospels are a news story, of witnessed Truth. Luke and (at a far lower plane) Christian publications have the same goal: To proclaim Christ's glory! They do that by not being surprised when bad things happen, but also not falling into hopelessness. They know that particular events are important because the world is important—but particular events are not ultimate. They are part of a bigger story of God accomplishing His will, so Christians can avoid panic even when things are bad. A Christian journalist trusts the biblical

message that God created the world and is active in the life of His creation. Christian journalists know that God created a good world, but Adam and Eve fell, and the whole creation with them.

Christian journalists like other Christians obviously see the evidence of the fall all around us. Possibly more than many of us, because of the nature of their profession which brings encounters with the ugly a bit more of an everyday occurrence. But they also know that ultimately the Bible is a story of redemption. Everywhere they see things that others do not see, or even deliberately ignore - the evidence of God remaking and reshaping this world. They may report on brokenness but also of the many stories of renewal, reconciliation, and repair in the world they report on.

The Christian journalist is a bearer of hope and confidence in a difficult and hard world, so that the present is liveable. Christian journalists therefore fulfil a catechetical calling. Their investigative work reflects the biblical reality that we live in the "not yet" of the coming kingdom, a time when our "adversary the

devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Yet, we also live in the "already" time, when the Father is working in glorious ways to spread the saving knowledge of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is good news, and journalists have been called to tell it too. With a little help from their readers too, who have the responsibility go encouraging God honouring journalism, they just might be able to enrich the world with a new and more wholesome approach to delivering and interpreting the news.



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The Blessing of the Lord

Rev. Dr. David Mende

Introduction

We live in a materialistic world. People run after wealth, pleasure, and fame. But as followers of Christ, we must not pursue possessions. What we need is the Lord's blessing. Psalm 127 contrasts God's blessing with the futility of life. As I take you through this familiar psalm, let's see what the blessing of the Lord is. I have titled this article **"The Blessing of the Lord."**

In this wisdom psalm, we see that without the Lord's blessing, human toil is futile. When God blesses us, we are truly blessed. However, if we don't give the rightful place to God in our lives, all our activities and efforts will be

futile. As a result, we will end up frustrated. A Latin motto, *Nisi Dominus Frusta* comes from the first words of this psalm. It means "Without the Lord, Frustration." How true! Thus, we should seek God above everything else. This psalm teaches us two vital lessons:

1. Without the Lord, all our efforts are in vain (Ps. 127:1-2).

In verse 1, "the house" may refer to the construction of a house or raising a family. It could even refer to both. Particularly, in the Old Testament, a family is often called a "house" (cf. Gen. 16:2; Exod. 1:21; Ruth 4:11, etc.). After mentioning the house, the psalmist mentions the city. Several houses make up a city.

Those who build a house must labor on it and those who watch over a city must stay awake. But the psalmist's point is that all these efforts must be made by trusting in God. It is God only who can make our work profitable.

Verse 2 alludes to the punishment of man in Genesis 3:17. The psalmist is not belittling the importance of hard work. Rather, he is saying that life is not just about working hard to provide food for oneself and his family. Instead, one should trust God to bless his work. God gives sleep to the righteous. The godly don't have restless anxiety. The provision of the Sabbath helps God's people to trust God for their daily needs. It also prevents them from becoming "workaholics."

Commenting on this psalm, the "Prince of Preachers," Charles Spurgeon says, "Note that the Psalmist does not bid the builder cease from labouring, nor suggest that watchmen should neglect their duty, nor that men should show their trust in God by doing nothing: nay, he supposes that they will do all that they can do, and then he forbids their fixing their trust in what they have done, and assures them that all

creature effort will be in vain unless the Creator puts forth his power, to render second causes effectual."

So, without the Lord, all our efforts are futile.

2. Children are a blessing from the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5).

This section reveals that a home is more than bricks and cement. The psalmist reiterates that children are a blessing from God (Ps. 113:9; Gen. 1:26-28; Deut. 7:14; 28:2-4; Prov. 17:6). James Boice writes, "The Jew would ask, why is the house being built if it is not for the family? And why are the watchmen protecting the city if not for the families that live in it? Then as now, the family was the basic unit and most important element of society."

Children are a heritage from Yahweh (v. 3). That's why they are his "reward." In the Old Testament, the primary inheritance of a Jew in the promised land was his property (Num. 26:53; Josh. 11:23; Judg. 2:6). However, if a man did not have children, the inheritance in the land would be lost to the nearest kinsman of his clan (Num. 27:8-11). So, for a Jew,

children were a "heritage" in a double sense.

In verse 4, the psalmist compares children to arrows. Just as the arrows protect a warrior, the children of one's youth protect him. Children who are born before the father becomes old provide security against isolation and protection in society. In those days, judgments were given at the city gate (v. 5; e.g. Ruth 4:1-2). Children will speak on behalf of their father in the presence of his enemies. The children provide multiple witnesses. Today, we must bring up our children in a way that they will learn to take care of their parents when they grow up.

Children are truly a blessing from God! As God's people, we can truly thank God for children as our nation celebrates Children's Day on November 14th and the world celebrates World Children's Day on November 20th.

Conclusion

If I have to encapsulate this article in one sentence, this is it: **Without the Lord's blessing, all human efforts are futile.**

May I encourage all of us to

depend on the Lord even as we work hard and thereby glorify God? May the Lord bless our efforts and give us and our families contentment, peace, and satisfaction!

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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There is a song that gets whole audiences emotional when they hear it sung soulfully at contests like America's Got Talent. It's the John Lennon song, "Imagine":

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people

Sharing all the world

Trouble with the song is that it starts by denying heaven:

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today

If we can deny heaven, then we can ignore and deny the differences that take some to hell. We feel that tolerance requires us to believe there's no hell to bother about. Just let people be themselves and do whatever pleases them.

Who's Jes, a sample survey of American Christians conducted by Probe Ministries found that

60% of adults under 40 say Jesus isn't the only way to salvation. They believe Jesus is only one of the ways, and Buddha, Muhammad et al show equally valid ways to be saved. Over 30% say they believe that Jesus sinned just like other people when He lived on earth or aren't sure about His total holiness.

Those who responded thus were not casual or nominal Christians. To clarify what they believed they were asked two questions:

1. Have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in your life today? *Answer: YES*

2. What best describes your belief about what will happen to you after you die? *Answer: I will go to heaven because I confessed my sins and accepted Jesus Christ as my savior.*

It is disturbing that the view that Jesus was neither the only way of salvation, nor perfect and sinless has surfaced among those who categorise themselves as believers.

Question is, whether this is just an American trend or is happening worldwide. The

percentages may vary, but given our pluralistic situation and the overriding desire to not give offence to compatriots, Indian Christians are similarly inclined to demote Jesus from being the only Saviour of all the peoples of the world.

Quite often people say that different groups call God by different names. That is all there is to it and we should not make a big deal of that. God is One, but some people call him "Ram" or "Krishna", while others call him "Allah", and yet others call him "Buddha", and Christians call Him "Jesus". Finite and fallible humans are the ones naming God, and it would be wrong to think that anyone gets it right totally.

Denying Revelation

That viewpoint would be absolutely right if there is no such thing as divine revelation. It would then be just a matter of human perception, speculation, interpretation and opinion.

The Apostle Paul argued that it is impossible for anyone to know another's mind, unless the person to be known reveals himself. From this he concluded

that humans cannot know God unless God reveals Himself (1 Cor. 2: 10-16). According to this Pauline argument, humans don't name God, but have to learn God's Name through divine revelation.

While those who have not received God's revelation may continue with a pluralistic attitude about God and salvation, it doesn't stand to reason for Christians to say that God can be known by many names and reached by many ways. Others can and may say what they will, but a Christian cannot claim to follow Jesus and at the same time say that Jesus is not the only way, because the Lord Himself categorically declared, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn. 14:6).

Degrading Jesus

It is no surprise that those who reject the claim of our Lord that He is the only Saviour for all people, think of Jesus as less than perfect and one who erred just like the rest of humanity. Jesus as the Man who was perfect and able to be the Saviour of humankind makes sinners want to pull Him down so that

they don't have to live in obedience to God.

How did the degradation of Jesus in the thinking of erstwhile believers come about? It's because people go fishing and cast around to find reason to not believe, listening to voices other than God's.

Two slanders against Christ have found a place in the thinking of some. In his novel The Da Vinci Code, Dan Brown resurrected an old heresy that Mary Magdalene was in fact Jesus' wife. The Gospel of Philip (a non-canonical Gnostic Gospel dated about the 3rd century) described her as Jesus' companion, as the disciple Jesus loved the most, and the one Jesus kissed on the mouth. Brown (taking his cue from so called New Testament scholars with Gnostic leanings) tries to make out that the apocryphal gospels were suppressed because they were not the writings of the majority party. Nonsense!

Before the gospels were put in writing, the gospel existed in oral tradition as the accepted teaching of the Church. It was for lacking conformity to the original

oral gospel and for not being apostolic in origin (either authored by an apostle or an apostle's known associate) that all of the Gnostic gospels (Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Mary, etc) were rejected.

The second slander is that of identifying Jesus as an active homosexual. On Good Friday in 2012 Anglican priest Paul Oestreicher preached that John referring to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved (Jn. 20:2; 21:7, 20) and as the one who leaned on Jesus at the Last Supper (13:23, 25) suggests that there was a homosexual relationship between them. Oestreicher did this to show his sympathy for homosexuals. Jesus was turned into a poster boy for a lifestyle and activity that the Word of God prohibits.

Who Says?

From the time of Adam and Eve, asking "Did God say that?" has been the response to the moral demands of God's revelatory Word. Debunking the Bible aids the human project of disobedience to God.

The accuracy of the Bible has long been in question for some

Christians. They believe that the theory of evolution proves that God could not have created the world. If that is so, then the rest of what the Bible says (especially the accounts of miracles) cannot be true. Impressed with the advances of science and technology, even those who are not students or scholars of science jump to the conclusion that science and all scientists don't believe that God is there.

Suffice it to say that the Bible is not a textbook of science detailing the mechanics of how God created the world. Essentially, all that the Bible states is that

- God commanded the world into existence out of nothing
- God created life
- Humans were created in "God's image" (that is like God in having a spiritual nature, and
- God was pleased that what He had created was good.

Listening to sources other than God's voice started when Eve and Adam listened to Satan, allowing him to raise doubts and shake them from their faith in the Creator. That is how the good

creation of God went bad. The Fall happened.

God stepped in to redeem the Fallen. Enter Jesus – God's perfect answer to the human problem. But now there are Christians who want to limit the scope of what God did in and through Jesus. They can't accept that Jesus is the only solution. They think that there has to be other ways.

Failing Churches

Kerby Anderson, president of Probe Ministries, said, "Pastors and church leaders just can't assume any longer that the members of their church or Christian organization have a biblical worldview."

Anderson attributed the change to the continual and growing influence of media: "These disturbing trends are, yes, due to pastors not consistently teaching biblical theory. But they can also be attributed to young Christians who are not paying attention, who are focused — nearly exclusively, it seems — on their phones, social media and other content they deem more compelling."

Are churches failing in presenting the biblical viewpoint? In mainline

churches, there is an overwhelming tendency to present what is trending in the world outside. For instance, in many denominations the pulpit calendar is filled with observances of all sorts of special days in keeping with denominational issues, UN concerns or Hallmark's special days and so on. The consequence is that there is not enough time to teach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, NKJV), the Bible and Christian doctrine. On the other hand, the free or non-liturgical churches tend to preach the same few themes over and over again (you must be saved; you must fast; you must tithe and support the church, etc).

Meanwhile, as Anderson analysed, the new generation of Christians turns to Google, Facebook and YouTube as authoritative sources for Christian knowledge. Once upon a time, children and youth were urged to do daily devotions. Memorising Scripture passages was assigned in the home and Sunday School. Nowadays, the inculcation and formation of such spiritual habits is cast aside.

In the face of all this, Anderson

said, that "we have to continue to explain the cost of salvation...that there is no way to salvation, other than through the sacrificial and atoning death of a sinless Christ. That no one can come to the Father except through the Son, but also that anyone may come through Him."

Sharing Christ

The Probe Ministries website notes that in the Roman Empire in AD 60, Christians were less than 1% of the population. "Three hundred years later, virtually the entire empire was at least nominally Christian."

By all means, Christians need to be pluralistic in the sense of being respectful toward those of other faiths, treating others as humans created in the image of God, and for whose salvation Jesus gave His life-blood. Pluralism does not require that we compromise and deny the tenets of our faith and our Christian worldview. Pluralism means that we care for friends and neighbours and colleagues – that they should know Jesus and experience salvation: "you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle

and respectful way" (1 Pet. 3:15-16, NLT).

Look at it this way. Sharing the gospel with others is about loving neighbours as we love ourselves by not denying them access to what we have. That is why the late Sinhalese theologian D T Niles said, "Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread".



To be hesitant and ashamed to tell others that Jesus is the only way is just plain selfishness.



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Responding to Persecution Biblically

Rev. Vijayesh Lal



(Adapted from Standing Strong Through the Storm a manual from Open Doors International.)

Persecution is nothing new to Christianity. Even today, Christians are the most persecuted religious group worldwide with an average of 100 plus Christians being killed each month.

It is generally believed that persecution brings Church growth and Church growth in turn brings persecution. The former may not be always true. It was Tertullian who famously said that, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Tertullian belonged to North Africa where Christianity was flourishing, but

soon afterward the Muslim invasion, the Church slowly vanished. Asia minor, after the 14th century and Japan (where Christianity was outlawed in the 17th century) are also examples where the Church did not flourish despite much persecution.

It is generally however true that Church growth brings persecution. This is confirmed by the words of Jesus in the Bible and through other verses too. "If they persecute me they will persecute you.." (John 15:20); 'In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,' (2 Timothy 3:12)

Whether the Church will flourish during times of persecution or

diminish is also dependent to a large extent on how the Church and Christians in particular react to the said persecution. If the response is positive and biblical then one can be confident that persecution will not eventually harm the Church but may also act as a growth agent.

In order to respond positively and biblically it is vital for us to know what the Bible says about persecution.

1. EXPECT IT

The Bible makes no secret of the fact that Christians will be persecuted. II Timothy 3:12 says, "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," Jesus himself said so on many occasions, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first." (John 15:18) and in verse 20 He says, "No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also." Jesus never promised his followers an easy life but said, "In this world you will have trouble." (John 16:33) but He adds, "..Take heart! I have overcome the world."

The early Church knew persecution to be a stark reality of their lives just the same as many believers even do now. Peter in his letter encourages the Church that was undergoing persecution in this way, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."

When Paul travelled throughout Asia Minor, he told the new believers, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22). He was realistically preparing them for the future as well as explaining their present situation. We should prepare for the same.

2. KNOW THAT GOD ALLOWS SUFFERING

Nothing ever comes upon us without the knowledge and permission of God. Since we know that persecution and suffering will come upon Christians, we should be prepared to accept it as the will of God. Peter makes this very plain in I Peter 2:19, "For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering

because he is conscious of God."

Also, I Peter 3:17 tells us, "It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." Then he sums up the matter in I Peter 4:19, "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good."

If we look closely we will see that there is much good that comes out of our suffering and persecution when allowed by God, so we never suffer without hope. Although we may not understand it at that particular moment, later on, as we reflect on our lives we will realise it was all for a purpose.

We know the story of Joseph and the trials that he went through but in the end he was able to say, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." Genesis 50:20. His sufferings resulted in the saving of the nation of Israel and its multiplication from a family of 70 to hundreds of thousands of

people but he still had to go through those sufferings.

The Bible tells us that God allows us to go through tough times so that our faith will be tested and proved (I Pet. 1:6,7; 5:10), so that we are drawn closer to Him (Hebrews 12: 3- 10) and so that the Church would grow. (Acts 8:1-7).

Persecution also brings us in unity. It is a great leveller. Following the late 1990's, the Church in India too has seen repeated calls for unity from various Christian leaders. Persecution and suffering often have a uniting effect.

RESPONSE

Now that we have seen what the Bible largely says about suffering and persecution, let's also look at the ways in which we can respond biblically to these situations. A wise philosopher has said that life is 20% actions and 80% reactions. In the face of actual persecution and suffering, the Bible clearly explains how the Christian is to react to these trials. Here are some specifics:

DON'T BE SURPRISED!

The Scriptures speak a lot about our attitudes and how we react to what comes our way. The first thing, Peter teaches us, is to not be surprised when suffering and persecution come our way. "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12,13). Suffering and persecution should be anticipated with the awareness that they do not interfere in God's plan for our lives.

REJOICE!

The directive from 1 Peter 4:13 to rejoice in our trials is perhaps one of the most challenging in the Bible. But it does parallel Jesus' teaching in the beatitudes (Matthew 5:11-12) as well as James in chapter 1 verses 2-4. The verb construction in the original language is continuous as in "keep on rejoicing".

We are not to be masochists – delighting in pain – but those who

rejoice that we can share in the sufferings of our Lord and be reunited with him upon his return.

Rejoicing is not being happy but having the inner assurance of the presence of God and of our relationship to Him. This enables us to stay calm in the midst of our storms.

Peter further indicates in verse 14 that another reason for joy in suffering is that the Holy Spirit rests upon us to lift us above the pain and fear. The same Spirit is available to us today allowing us to know the power of suffering in any persecution. He is the one who gives special grace. So rejoice!

PRAY WITH THANKFULNESS

In Philippians 4:6, the Apostle Paul urges us to "...not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." While it is assumed we will cry out to God for help when problems come, Paul does not expect us to doubt, blame or question God. Rather we react with an attitude of thankfulness because God has

a purpose for us and supplies us with his resurrection power. The next verse expresses the results of such a grateful heart: "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

The Scriptures also teach us to pray for the sufferers (Acts 12:5; Hebrews 13:3 and Colossians 4:18) as well as for the persecutors (Matthew 5:44 and Romans 12:4). There should also be prayer for wisdom in discerning how to respond correctly to persecution because there does not seem to be one universally correct way.

EVALUATE THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING

In I Peter 4:15-19 we see two other necessary elements of proper response to suffering and persecution. One is to evaluate the suffering. Peter indicates that all suffering is not necessarily God's will. He shares four evils for which we should never suffer: murder, theft, evil-doing and troublesome meddling. We must evaluate the suffering's purpose and cause and be sure we are in

God's will in the suffering.

Some of our persecution today is self-inflicted. We must make an effort never to engage in one-upmanship as far as evangelism is concerned. Degrading or disrespectful comments about other faiths and religions is to be avoided at all costs. We also need to be concerned about sound levels in our meetings so that we do not cause inconvenience to others. Care should also be taken that we do not carry on high publicity meetings alongside or in competition to the major festivals of other. A simple lifestyle and sensitivity towards our fellow human beings can go a long way and help us avoid unnecessary confrontation.

RESPOND TO SUFFERING AS CHRIST DID

When we suffer as Christ suffered, we should respond as Christ responded. Our suffering may lose its value as a witness to a lost world if we respond in the flesh. Christ did not return insult for insult. He did not threaten. He did not ask for revenge on those who wronged Him. He loved them

and prayed for them. We are told to bless those who curse us, love those who hate us, pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:38-48).

There are several known cases where the very men who led in persecution of Christians later became Christians themselves because of the way the Christians took the abuse (1 Peter 3:8-12). In fact, Gladys Staines forgiving the killer of her husband and sons is one of the greatest Christian witness that India has seen in recent times.

TRUST GOD!

Peter also indicates in 1 Peter 4:19 that a disciple's attitude and response should be that of "entrusting himself to God". The word entrusting is a banking term referring to depositing for safekeeping. Peter is thus saying that our faithful creator is completely capable and trustworthy in taking care of all our needs. It is so much easier to deal with suffering if we have already purposed in our hearts to turn everything over to the Lord. If we have an attitude of submission, obedience, and

sacrificial service, we will not be concerned about the trials and persecutions He may allow.

STAND FIRM AND STAND TOGETHER

As members of the same family we have the responsibility to come to the aid of another member who is suffering. The body of Christ is strong when each part is closely knit together. When one part suffers, all the other members suffer (1 Corinthians 12:20-27).

One of the saddest stories that I have heard is about a group of Christians rejoicing over the persecution of another group of Christians in a part of India. This 'they deserved it' kind of attitude neither helps the Church nor the cause of Christ.

There have been known instances when leadership distances itself from a pastor or an evangelists facing persecution because they are afraid of the legal issues accompanying the situation. A pastor whose leader had switched off his phone after the pastor was beaten up and taken to the police station told

me, "I feel so utterly alone and deserted."

USE YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS

In Acts 22, we read of how Paul used his legal rights as a Roman citizen in the face of persecution. We should not be afraid to do so. We are blessed to live in a country that has the freedom of religion and a constitution that guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens.

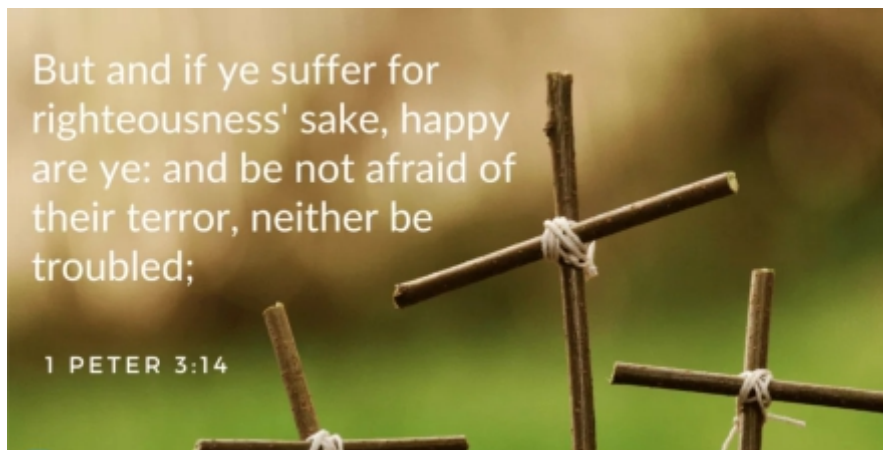
Resorting to legal help is a very biblical way of responding to persecution. It should not be confused with forgiveness, for forgiveness is not pardoning. That domain belongs to the law, where as forgiveness is an

individual transaction between the persecuted and the persecutor.

Every Christian worker must know their Bible and the Indian constitution. We as citizens are under obligation to be aware not only of our responsibilities but also our rights.



Rev. Vijayesh Lal
General Secretary
Evangelical Fellowship of India



STUDENTS, SHINE BRIGHT!

Ms. Stuti Farmer



November 17th, International Student's day is celebrated in commemorating the Czech universities which were stormed by Nazis in 1939. So, if you are a student, we celebrate you! You are unique, important and very much loved. No student's life is ever mellow or laid-back, it is becoming harder as the years go by. But on the brighter side, student life is a wonderful time of our lives. It is filled with the beautiful laughter with friends, enjoying the staples from our school or college canteens, the early mornings with brewing coffee or late-night studies before exams, the rushing to tuitions after school, and endless phone calls with our parents from

college hostels, the last-minute revision before exams and not forgetting, the pleasure of taking naps during online classes. **The lives of students are very interesting, their thoughts are gripping and their actions are engaging. Students no matter from which field or area of study, can contribute to building our nation. No student is ever insignificant, every student is worthy and valuable.** You should praise God every single day because you are fearfully and wonderfully made. Your education gives you great power and with great power comes great responsibility. This world student day, think about some responsibilities which you being a student have to carry out.

- **Fellowships & friendships -**

Student life is that time of your life, which you will always cherish among your best memories, so make the most of it. Make sure that you surround yourself with friends who build you spiritually and bring out the best in you, the ones who draw you close to God, and always stand beside you being the shoulder you can lean on. Choose your friends wisely and make sure that if they have not yet accepted Christ as their Lord and saviour, then you should be the one impacting them, and it should not be the other way around. Ground yourselves in God's word and spend quality time in Bible study where your faith will grow stronger. Make sure to start your day by morning Quiet time which will nurture your spiritual life and guide your path like a lamp unto your feet enabling you in every decision you take and choices you make throughout the day. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth...Ecclesiastes 12:1. You need to have a few godly friends with whom you can share your struggles, you need to be

plugged into a Christian fellowship of your church or the various Student movements which minister to the student community. If your college does not have a fellowship then you can initiate to start one by gathering your friends and taking help from your mentors. All this will mould you correctly, help you set standards for your life to be useful in the long haul.

- **Sow and reap - Students are known as the cream of our society because they are impactful and dynamic.**

Since you have a crucial role in your society, you have to be careful of what you sow because that is what you shall reap. **"Your emotions and thoughts drive your actions" and what you feed your mind with, drives your emotions in turn. Ask yourselves this; what do you sow in your mind? Philippians 4:8 reminds us that whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.** Sow the seeds of your hard work, effective time

management, good readings, planning, and interest in your subject to reap good grades and success in your overall academics. **Sow your hard work in the study of your choice because this is your life, study what you love and not what society dictates you to.** Every student, be it someone studying business, finance, engineering, journalism, science, defence, languages, literature, psychology, and so on is a future pillar for building this nation. Do not sow in your thoughts with gossips, hurtful words of people, wrong advice, and lustful desires on the media but feed it with the Bread of life which God has given us, His word which is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.

- **Make the right choices** - Choose to spend your time wisely, you need not go crazy about your studies and be engrossed in them but you can choose to involve in **activities that edify you both spiritually and mentally.** Choose not to waste your money on

unnecessary buys, choose to finish your assignments or works beforehand if you get a chance to attend a Christian camp or retreat during the holidays, choose to watch movies and shows which do not defile you in any way, **do not let sin entangle you by being very firm in your convictions. Remember Daniel 1:8 in which he resolves not to defile himself.**

- **Be a witness on your campus** - In the city you live, on the roads you walk, in the campus where you study, and in the field of study which you have chosen, by the words you speak or write, you need to make a difference. **You are a student, you are impactful and powerful, you can make a difference** and by doing so, you can be a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are fellow students around you, **living in hurt, pornography, addictions, struggles, and depression among whom you can spread the love of Christ reminding them that there is always hope when you have Jesus. You need not preach to**

them, but your life may be the only gospel they ever read so make sure you live a good one. Your one phone call, your one visit to a sick classmate, your one invitation to fellowship, your one helping hand in academics, and your one intercessory prayer can make a huge difference! Matthew 5:16, **Let your light shine before men,** that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. So that little light of yours, do you choose to let it shine? Yes?

Then, let it shine, come on students, shine bright!



My name is Stuti Farmer,
I belong to Dehradun. Completed B.Sc in Botany, Zoology and Geology. I am involved with the UESI ministry and love to sing and write.

**Train up a child in the
way he should go: even
when he is old he will
not depart from it.**

Proverbs 22:6

Children's Day: What's so special?

Mr. Hansraj Jain



"Never sleep after 4 PM", was the maxim that my wife introduced into our family. So, come 4 PM, true to his built-in clock, Milo the Beagle would climb my bed. He whined and barked his head off until I got out of bed. I knew precisely what Milo wanted. He was telling me that it was time for our walk. Any delay meant dusk would be upon us followed, obviously, by night. That's all very well. But my puzzle was this (and I am still uncertain): Was it Milo whom I was taking for his walk, or was it Milo who was taking me for his walk? Any thoughts?

My youngest grandson walked in and saw me at work writing this article. When I asked him what he wanted, he hushed me and said, I am reading your article. In

silence, I watched as the seven-year-old rapidly read. He then blurted out, saying, "this is very "funny", Dadaji. Don't you know that it is always us who take Milo for his walk and not the other way around?" The 7 Years old went on to speak wisdom, reasoning his point of view to my 'confused' mind.

Later that evening, as we walked Milo (remember we are the dog owners and not the dog who has us as his owner (as if he had chosen to have us belong to him!)), a couple of carloads of people stopped us. The man in charge of the rest of the occupants in the car asked from behind the door of the car, "what kind of a dog I, (being the only adult among two grandsons!), was walking (or was it, what type

of dog was walking me?). I suppose Beagles aren't all that common.

The man in the car stepped out and went up to Milo, and patted him. Then the gentleman turning around, spoke to the two of his own, similarly aged children to my grandsons, to step out of the car bringing along their tiny dog - a Shitzu.

I love my grandsons' company. They are innovative, inquisitive, and speak their mind (perhaps infected with the current disease called "verbal diarrhoea").

They have a worldview, unlike my own, and aren't afraid to express them - so unlike we adults - my daughter did a write up while at school for her English Lesson Project and gave it the title, "adult hypocrisy". Fascinatingq, how we have now come full circle! Humm... to think for a moment, I wonder if this wasn't one of the factors that Jesus found a fascinating company in children? Therefore, from being approachable to all, Jesus' accepted children into his company with a special fondness. Mark the disciple, in his Gospel, tells us that Jesus went a step

further in corrective mode when his twelve disciples attempted to stop some parents who brought their children for Jesus to bless them. Adult behaviour and approach to an issue is a real revealer of their attitude. Jesus, in removing the barrier erected to control who could or could not approach him (even by those who were a product of their socio-cultural-religious, political prejudice and tradition), removed the wall of separation forever. By this act, Jesus destroyed the set norm. He also laid down a fresh foundation for the relationship between God the Creator with humans, his creation. Building this "Bridge of Relationship", he paid with his very life.

In God's economy, children are no minor players or of small value, as in Jesus' time and so now. Therefore, in permitting children with their parents to come to him, Jesus sets the ball rolling to introduce and practice equal value and acceptance of the children as adults.

Mulling over the incident a little more, it was fascinating to observe that Jesus presents us with a fresh perspective and mode of action that he was

processing along with the Father God. It appears that Jesus sought to remove, forever, all negative perceptions and attitudes towards parents and their wee-ones brought on by wrong interpretation of God and man centred world. They kept the door open only for adult men who could seek to enter into God's presence. Now children needed neither a permit, a written sanction, or advance notice for an appointment. Heaven's door was wide open. All the time. All parents and children now had access and space to enter into His presence. Both the parents and their children will always be worthy of being recipients of His blessings and acceptance. No bar! No set time! No prior permission or appointment required.

Mark, in verse 15, says, Jesus took the children in his arms and blessed them - a visual portrayal of Jesus' worldview pointing to children's immense worth and model. Likewise, we adults have lessons to draw from children - lessons that portray and model acts and claims of faith relationship with God, guilelessness, acts founded on trust driven confidence. These,

and other characters like them, align well with the children's attitude, perspective, and natural innocent behaviour that borders on naivety and wisdom. Listen to Jesus for what he said to his disciples, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." (Mark 10:13-15).

It is lovely the way Mark ends the discourse. He portrays Jesus in action. Jesus, says Mark, "...took them in his arms and blessed them (the children), laying his hands on them." (Mk.10:16).

My Prayer:

Thank you, Heavenly Father, in Jesus' name, for not giving up on us. We are immensely grateful to your beloved Son Jesus, who has restored us to yourself. Although we are very conscious unrepentant that by our rebellion and unrepentant heart, we broke your heart. And like the prodigal son said after he came to his senses and returned to his father, "I am (we are) unworthy to be called your son (children of the Living God), please accept us as

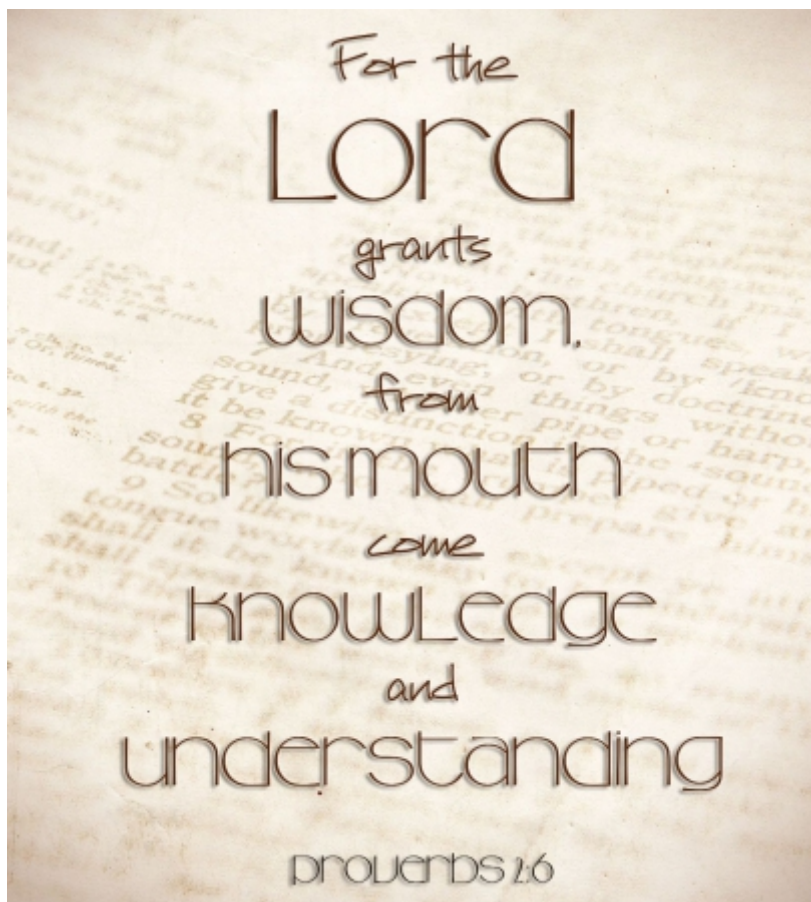
one of your servants. But you, out of magnanimity of your heart, have, instead, received and welcomed us and called us your children.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, and Thank You, Jesus!"

How awesome! Let's celebrate this, our Children's Day, like none other days!



Mr. Hansraj Jain
Managing Director, Family, Marriage & Human Relationships, INHERITORS.





former General Secretary,
Evangelical Fellowship of India
and Asia Evangelical Alliance

During one of my visits to Tokyo, Japan, my Japanese friend, Dr. Rev. Joshua Tsutada (former President of Immanuel Bible College), took me to Tokyo University to listen to the famous MESSIAH sung by a hundred voice choir. Messiah was composed by George Fredrick Handel, a German composer settled in England. It has three parts. The first part begins with Isaiah 40:1 to 5.

- Isaiah 40: 1 and 2, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God, Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has

been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins". One of my favourite songs is Bridge Over Troubled Waters by Paul Simon and Arthur Garfunkle, a song of Comfort. It goes like this, " When you are weary, feeling small, when tears are in your eyes and friends just cannot be found, when you are down and out, when you are on the street, when evening falls so hard, I will comfort. When darkness comes and pain is all around, like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down."

"COMFORT, COMFORT MY PEOPLE SAYS YOUR GOD." These words were directed to the people of Israel. They were

conquered by Assyrians and were in exile from their home. In their pain and seemingly hopeless situation, they needed to be comforted of the coming of the Messiah to liberate them. These words are directed to us also. Be comforted. Be assured. Be strengthened. The King has come to deliver us to set us free from the bondage of sin and to live in and for Him. Your waiting, your struggles, your pain, your anxiety and your tears are over. Jesus our Saviour has absolutely paid for our sins. Isaiah 53: "He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted yet He did not open His mouth, He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth.

Ephesians 1:7: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with him. Keep your roots deep in him, build your lives on him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught. And be filled with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7)

There was a time when Charles Wesley, brother of John Wesley and a great hymn writer received the assurance of salvation and transformed by the Power and love of Christ. He put down his experience in one of his hymns, "Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound in sin and nature's night; thine eye diffused a quickening ray- I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; my

chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee." Over the years, millions of people in all ethnic groups and from various walks of life have testified that by accepting Christ as their Saviour and Lord their chains fell off, their heart was free, and they rose, went forth and followed Him. A few months ago, a young man visited me to spend time with me. In the course of our conversation, I asked him about his experience in Christ. He said, "Uncle, there was a time I was begging on the streets of Hyderabad, no future and no hope. At that time, a man transformed by the love of Christ shared with me his experience in Christ. Through him the spirit of Christ touched me, and I surrendered my life to the living Christ and my life has changed. Now, he and his wife are in the ministry of caring for the poor elderly people. What about you? Is this your experience?"

II. Isaiah 40: 3 and 4, "A voice of one calling : "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up,

every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain."

Those days, the common practice of kings, before travelling into a new place was to send a group of people ahead of them to make sure the roads were easy to travel by levelling them and by removing the obstacles for smooth travel. The mountain, the hill and the rough road are symbolic pictures.

A. Every Valley shall be raised up. The people who are humiliated, trampled down, oppressed, who consider themselves worthless, the broken hearted will be exalted because the Saviour has come. A believer in Christ shared that for forty years, she lived in anger. She was filled with low self-esteem, fear, depression and hopelessness. She suppressed the pain and the reality of her childhood when she was physically and sexually abused. Due to this, she indulged in destructive acts against herself and others. One day, in that terrible situation she called out to God. He heard her cry and took hold of her. She began to realize

that she was His treasured possession, with a purpose to live.

B. Every mountain and hill made low. Mountains and hills here represent the proud and arrogant. Pride is described as *self-righteousness*, boastfulness, superior attitude, and self-centeredness. There was a man who, whenever, he went to a christening service wanted to be the baby to be christened; whenever he went to a wedding service, he wanted to be the bride; and whenever he went to a funeral service, he wanted to be the corpse. Because of his pride, he wanted all eyes to be on him. God detests the proud. Proverbs 11:2: When pride comes, then comes shame but with the humble, is wisdom. James 4:6, "God resists the proud, He gives grace to the humble."

"A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you."? C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity.

Someone has said, Pride is the only disease that makes

everyone sick except the person who has it.

C. The rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. There are people who live in crookedness, deception and web of lies. The Saviour has the power to forgive us and to set us right and make us a blessing. He has the power to transform us and to make us partakers of His divine nature.

III. Isaiah 40:5 "And the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken".

The glory of God is the beauty of His spirit. It is not an aesthetic beauty or a material beauty, but it is the beauty that emanates from His character-the excellence of His holiness, the excellence of His righteousness and justice and the excellence His redemptive power. The glory of God lies in His power, in His presence and in His knowledge and wisdom. He reveals His glory by His creative grace, by His sustaining grace, and by His redeeming grace.

His glory is revealed by

identifying Himself with the poor, the marginalized, and the exploited. By rebuking and admonishing the spiritually; by His confrontational and challenging teachings; He revealed His glory. By taking upon Himself our sins and going through a very cruel and agonizing death, He revealed His glory. When He rose from the dead and ascended into the heavens, He revealed His glory. By transforming the lives of people from all walks of life everywhere, He continues to reveal His glory. Soon, He will return in all His glory as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

When we are in right relationship with our Heavenly Father and with one another - When we as His people live in integrity, accountability, and generosity.

When we put away all bitterness, wrath and malice and evil speaking and when we forgive the unforgivable; when we love the unlovable, His glory is revealed through us. When we

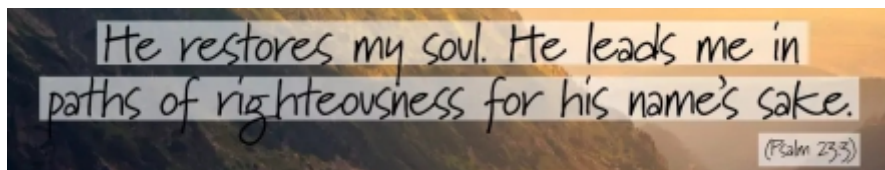
live together unitedly in the Body of Christ loving one another; caring for one another; building up one another; correcting one another with kindness, His glory is revealed.

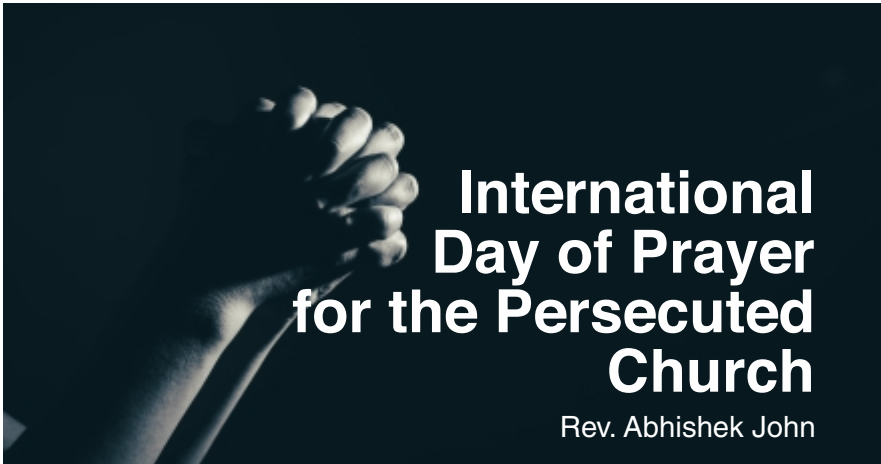
When we reach out to others sharing with them the good news of His Kingdom and lead them into His Kingdom, His glory is revealed.

When we are an oracle of hope to your brothers and sisters in Christ, offer them a word of hope from Christ, with the tender touch of comfort, His glory is revealed.



Rev. Dr. Francis Sunderaraj
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Persecution – How do we respond?

"I do not believe that God has given us this trial to no purpose. I know that the day will come when we will clearly understand why this persecution with all its sufferings have been bestowed upon us – for everything that Our Lord does is for our good. And yet, even as I write these words, I feel the oppressive weight in my heart of those last stammering words of Kichijir on the morning of his departure: 'Why has Deus Sama [God] imposed this suffering upon us?' And then the resentment in those eyes that he turned upon me. 'Father', he had said, 'what evil have we done?'"

These thoughts of Sebastian Rodrigues are penned beautifully

by Shusaku Endo in his 1966 novel, *Silence*. It tells the story of Fr. Rodrigues, a seventeenth-century Portuguese priest, in Japan at the height of the fearful persecution of the Christian community. After Francis Xavier, with the help of Anjiro, a Japanese Christian, brought Christianity to Japan in 1549, the Christian community gradually grew to 150,000 by 1582. However, religious tolerance started to wane after a gradual change in the political climate of the country. By 1614, an edict was sent out to exterminate Christianity and Christians in Japan. By the time of the edict, the baptized membership of the churches had reached about 300,000 Christians. Faithfulness unto death as a martyr soon became a symbol of Japanese

believers; while bystanders marveled at the calm with which the Japanese Christians accepted torture and death without resistance. All year long their churches were burnt, destroyed, or closed. By 1651 alone Japan had about 4,045 well documented martyrdoms. The persecution was brutal and the tortures fiendish. Some were killed by a gruesome dance of death in straw raincoats set on fire while their hands were tied behind their back. Thousands of Christians were interrogated, flushed out of hiding, and made to apostatize by stepping on metal plaques bearing the face of Christ. Those who refused, faced imprisonment, loss of property, and torture. Many apostatized. Shusaku Endo's novel *Silence* captures the agony, pain, and trauma of those Christian martyrs. However, despite the ubiquitous clampdown, Christianity survived and hidden Christians – the *Kakure Kirishitans* – continued to practice Christianity in secret, until the country opened to Christianity again in the 19th century.

I pluck this feather out of history to look at the question that Kichijir asked, "Why has God

imposed this suffering on us?" How often we resonate that question when faced with human apathy and hate! How often our answer to that question revolves around picking biblical passages and giving a sound theological response! **What would be our response if persecuted Christians voice their pain in a similar fashion?** By 'we', I imply those of us who are left untouched by the smoldering fire of hate and anger directed towards Christians in various parts of India. Very often, the only solution and remedy that we offer is a vague, "I will be praying for you". Yet, there is more that can be done.

Standing Beside

The book of Nehemiah presents the story of a leader who breaks down after hearing the predicament of his people in Jerusalem. The walls had been burnt down and Jerusalem lay in ruins. Moved by the sufferings of his people Nehemiah entreats King Artaxerxes to allow him a journey to Jerusalem. Once there, Nehemiah gathers the inhabitants, boosts their morale to rebuild the broken walls, and encourages them saying, "The God of heaven will help us succeed. We, his servants, will

start rebuilding this wall" (Nehemiah 1:20). So often, it is presence glued with prayer that does wonders than mere verbal assurances of prayers. Being present beside a persecuted brother or sister can provide strength to their bones. A reassuring phone call, a financial support of help when needed, or a warm embrace, when possible, etc. go a long way in negating and countering the hatred that is meted out by persecutors. Volunteers at Evangelical Fellowship of India's Religious Liberty Commission have always endeavored to provide support and advocacy to persecuted Christians with a remarkable sense of empathy and sensitivity.

Voicing Concerns

One of Nehemiah's first steps after hearing about the situation in Jerusalem was to kneel in prayer and fast. He did not stop there. He chose to bring the matter to the hearing of the king. He knew that he had to voice his concern. He exclaimed, "How can I not be sad? For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and the gates have been destroyed by fire" (Neh. 2:3). On occasions, we hear people coming up with

preposterous notions that Christian persecution does not exist. Data that are released by responsible Christian advocacy groups in India are well researched and verified. Each case is given enough attention and only after multiple sources are contacted, they make it to the periodical reports. Such data are credible sources which can be used by churches to voice concerns and raise the issue in the public sphere.

Spreading Awareness

Once in Jerusalem, Nehemiah surveys the state of the destruction of the wall at night. Later, he gathers the city officials – the priests, the nobles, those in administration – and exhorts them to consider that God was with him and with them to rebuild the broken walls. In addition to voicing our concerns in the public sphere, a step further would be to raise awareness among friends and acquaintances about the incidents happening in other parts of the country. In 1 Corinthians 12:26 Paul says, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." Any act of violence, conflict,

hostility, or opposition faced by any church, whether located in urban or far-flung area, whether at the center or periphery, deserves our equal attention and response. The Religious Liberty Commission releases a monthly prayer calendar to highlight incidents and compiles prayer requests that churches can use in their worship services or individual family prayers.

Our beloved nation provides every citizen the constitutional guarantee to practice, profess and propagate our beliefs. Though some of us live and breathe the air of religious freedom yet that is not the reality in every corner of the country. Based on the most updated records there have been around 280 incidents of persecution this year in various parts of India. A total of 22 incidents of violence were reported only between October 1 and 10; 13 of them were recorded on October 3 alone.

One of the secrets that helped the *Kakure Kirishitans* to survive for two centuries in hiding was their commitment to stand with each other, to strengthen each other's faith, and to stay devoted to Christ. As churches, it

is the need of the hour to embrace those that are being persecuted at the margins of the ecclesiastical landscape in India – to stand beside them, to voice our concerns, and to spread awareness. On the International Day of Prayer for the persecuted, may we strive to share information, bring awareness, and tie our resolve to seek justice as we feel the pain of our persecuted brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters who are suffering for their faith.



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Prayer points for IDOP for the persecuted Churches in 2021

Pray that God's presence in times of trouble will be like a balm for the troubled hearts and souls of the persecuted Church, as well as their physical suffering. **(2 Thess 2:16-17)**

Pray that the persecuted Church should be able to forgive and love their persecutors as Christ did. Love would overflow from their hearts, and they would pray unceasingly for their persecutors' hearts to be changed and for salvation in Christ. **(Matthew 5:44)**

Pray that God opens their eyes to see the bigger picture of God's salvation plan and that they are able to witness to their persecutor about Christ's love with boldness, strength, and courage. **(Col 4:3)**

Pray that the Lord will continually point the persecuted Church to their heavenly inheritance so that they will remain joyful in spite of suffering. **(Acts 5:41)**

Pray that they are reminded that following Christ will result in them receiving back 100 times what they have lost. **(Matt 19:29)**

Pray for spiritual maturity that would magnify God. **(Colossians 1:28-29)**

Pray for those persecuted who are languishing in prison due to false accusations and are denied justice, early release and restoration. In these adverse circumstances, pray for victory and the peace of God in their hearts.

Pray that persecuted Christians are able to exercise their religious freedom. So that they are able to practice, profess and propagate religion freely.

Pray that authorities and governments would ensure that religious freedom continues to prevail for the persecuted Christians in the countries where it already exists.

Pray that world leaders will do all they can to combat this religious persecution against Christians.

Pray that governments and authorities of nations bring out and uphold legislation that keeps the door open for the Gospel to be preached.

Pray that investigations by law enforcement agencies around the world will be handled with integrity and fairness in matters of religious freedom towards persecuted churches.

Pray that the judiciary of countries will act in a just and fair manner towards persecuted churches in matters of religious freedom.

Pray that churches would rise in these testing and desperate times to support the persecuted church.

Pray that local Church leaders around the world will continue to proclaim God's Word with love and compassion, despite ongoing religious persecution.

Pray that the persecuted church's love for our Lord Jesus Christ will grow and they will realize the hope God offers.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen and guide the persecuted church.

Pray for the families and loved ones of those who are being persecuted and that God will provide and protect them.

Pray for the persecuted church to continue sharing the gospel in a loving and respectful way.

Pray that the persecuted church will grow despite the ongoing persecution.

Pray for God's grace and love to influence those who perpetrate persecution.

PUNJAB, KARNATAKA MOBILISE TO STOP EVANGELICAL WORK

Dr. John Dayal



It is a moot question which of two October developments poses a more potent threat to Christian mission in India, or at least in states other than Kerala, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland.

The first development is a firman, or diktat by the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee [SGPC], to curb Gospel and evangelical activities among the Sikhs in the state of Punjab. The SGPC has sent 150 teams, each comprising of seven preachers, to scour through the 12,729 villages in the state. This is ostensibly to extend their own pastoral care to the young in Sikh families so they can resist

temptations that may come their way.

This is almost exactly what the Islamic Tablighi Jamaat does among Muslims, and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Arya Samaj do among the Hindus in the country. Unexceptional, on the face of it.

The second is a decision by the Bharatiya Janata Party government in the southern state of Karnataka through its Backward Classes and Minorities Welfare Committee to investigate "official and non-official" Christian missionaries. The State is expected to join ten other states which have passed laws against "forcible and fraudulent

conversions. The laws were once directed against Christians, and in the last few months against Muslims. Christians are back as target now.

Karnataka legislative BJP member Goolihatti Shekar who advocated the registration of Christian missionaries, said 40% of churches in Karnataka are "unofficial and not recognized by the state."

India does not have a law for registering places of religious worship, with extant regulations covering only properties, management trusts and educational and health institutions. Various governments in the past have sought to conduct surveys of churches and mission groups and pastors, but all attempts were given up after a few days of publicity and political posturing.

But the state patronage to such political "gossip" did embolden local Hindutva groups to embark on a season of vigilante activity, beating up itinerant pastors, breaking into homes where Christians were praying, or damaging small village prayer

halls. The police watched. The victims were too frightened to insist that the law be obeyed.

The new move is possibly doomed to failure. The Metropolitan Archbishop of Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka, Peter Machado, has already protested the survey, saying it was "a dangerous exercise", more so at a time when the conversion bogey had whipped up anti-religious feelings.

Targeted violence and lynch mobs are all but normalised in India of 2021. And while the Hindu-Muslim polarisation takes centre-stage, with the official machinery ranged firmly against religious minorities in north Indian states, the SGPC move escalates the threat of harassment and violence targeting the Christians in Punjab, who are just over 1 % of the population and concentrated largely in the region of Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts.

Most, but not all, Punjabi Christians have their roots in the Dalit community in the state. In fact, when the new chief minister

of Punjab, Charanjit Singh Chhani took office, upper caste politicians accused him of being a closet Christian. He was the first Dalit to ascend that office in a very caste conscious state. The chief minister countered the insinuations by organising the marriage of his son in a Gurudwara under Sikh rites in full glare of national publicity.

By itself, the SGPC move would have been an extra-constitutional irritant. What brings it to attention is the political connect between the committee whose task is administering Sikh religious places in state, and the Akali Dal which has ruled Punjab for long periods of time, and now holds sway by proxy over the holiest places in the Sikh faith. As such, decisions of the SGPC carry considerable sway over the community.

And in the community are the autonomous groups of armed monks, called Nihangs, who are a law unto themselves. They were in the news at the height of the Covid lockdowns when one of them chopped off the hand of a police sub inspector who was trying to stop his movements.

This week, a group of Nihangs who had come to join a protest of the country's farmers at the borders of national capital Delhi, brutally mutilated and killed a Dalit worker who, they alleged, had touched their holy books. The farmers' leaders have distanced themselves from the Nihangs.

Sacrilege of the Sikh holy book, Guru Granth Sahib, is as much an issue in the Indian Punjab as damage to the Quran allegedly by Christians is in Pakistan where the penalty under the law is death.

The Nihangs are in many ways the arbiters of the Sikh way of life in the rural areas of Punjab where they are both respected and feared. They make imposing figures, often mounted on horses, with tall turbans embellished with steel chains of war, armed with steel spears and swords. From personal experience, I can vouch that they are touchy, and you cross their path at your own peril. Even the RSS is afraid of them, it is said.

Editor Seema Mustafa wrote of them, "Nihangs have always been a volatile force in Punjab. I

have seen them closely during the Bhindranwale led agitation and visited their deras. They follow their own path, are violent, and completely out of anyone's control."

It does not take a febrile imagination to conjure scenarios where self-appointed guardians of the faith take upon themselves to hunt missionaries either in Punjab or Karnataka. We already have examples from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh where the RSS has all but taken over from the state in moral and religious policing. And while Evangelical and Pentecostal pastors are the main victims, Catholic nuns and clergy have faced their share of violence, incarceration and threatened bodily harm.

In the process, the promise of Article 25 of India's Constitution to protect the rights of an individual to freely profess, practice, and propagate the religion of their choice have gone for a toss.

And while Christians – and now Muslims – are the target, not many seem to realise that the 20 percent or so population of Dalits

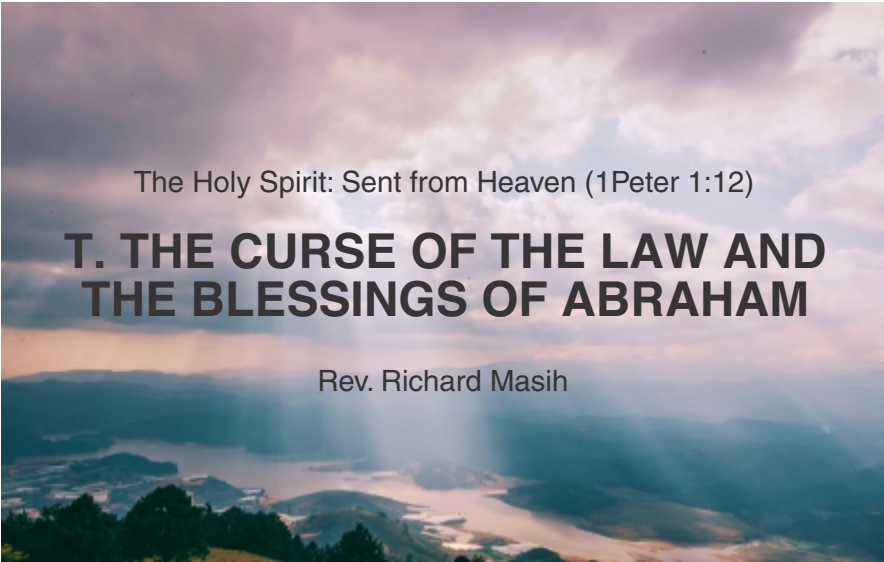
in the country are effectively denied the freedom to choose the faith they wish to follow.

Dr B R Ambedkar who had chaired the committee which wrote the Constitution, tested its strength himself in 1956, when he converted to Buddhism, fulfilling a promise he had publicly made, that he would not die a Hindu. Tens of thousands of Dalits converted to Buddhism with him. In a symbolic gesture, he organised the conversion ceremony not too far from the headquarters of the RSS in the city of Nagpur. The RSS is now trying to appropriate Ambedkar and his legacy, as that of his nemesis, Mahatma Gandhi. Those are ironies of Indian political history.



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

T. THE CURSE OF THE LAW AND THE BLESSINGS OF ABRAHAM

Rev. Richard Masih

Whenever there is a continual financial crisis, failure, frustration, set-backs, sickness, disease and poverty, etc., there are some who are apt to say that the curse of the Law is yet to be broken so that the blessings of Abraham may flow in. The curse of the Law came through our failure to obey the Law in its entirety. We read in Deuteronomy 27:26, "Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'" The people had brought the curse upon themselves by binding themselves that they will do everything that God commands

them to do. It says in Exodus 19:8, "All the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do.' And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD."

Further, we read in Exodus 24:3,7, "Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do... Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be

obedient." Then we read again, "Go near and hear all that the LORD our God will say, and speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it" (Deuteronomy 5:27). "You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice" (Deuteronomy 26:17).

Yet, the subsequent history of the people of Israel showed how lax they were keeping the Law. God did not have confidence in them. He says to Moses in Deuteronomy 31:16, "And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then, these people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them." Moses himself had this to say to the people of Israel. "For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much

more after my death" (Deuteronomy 31:27)!

From where the 'generational curse' (curse coming from one generation to another) has come? According to them, it is coming from Exodus 20:5, "I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me" (Deuteronomy 20:9). We read in Jeremiah 11:3, "You shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God, that I may confirm the oath that I swore to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day.'" "Then I answered, "So be it, LORD." Again, we read in Galatians 3:10, "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of

the Law, and do them."

The curse of the Law brought immense misery and suffering. We read in Deuteronomy 28:20-22,25,28,48,61,65,66,

- The LORD will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me.
- The LORD will make the pestilence stick to you until he has consumed you off the land that you are entering to take possession of it.
- The LORD will strike you with wasting disease and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat, and with drought and with blight and with mildew. They shall pursue you until you perish...
- The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

- ...therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you...
- Every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will bring upon you, until you are destroyed...
- And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot,
- ...but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul.
- Your life shall hang in doubt before you.
- Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life."

The curse of the Law is carried on to the third and the fourth generation. We have seen in Exodus 20:5, "You shall not bow

down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth **generation** of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments." keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth **generation**" (Exodus 34:7).

"The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth **generation** (Numbers 14:18). "You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers **to their children after them**, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are

open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds" (Jeremiah 32:18).

Yet, the good news is that the curse of the Law is automatically broken when we are redeemed by the precious blood of Lord Jesus Christ. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). "...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1Peter 1:18,19). Christ took our curse on himself when he hung on the cross. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" (Galatians 3:13).

In our Lord Jesus Christ, the curse of the Law gives way to the blessings of Abraham when we turn to our Lord and put our faith

in him. We do not need to break the curse/bondage either by ourselves or get it cancelled through some other servant(s) of God. It gets automatically cancelled. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." There is no condemnation because the curse has been taken away.

The curse of the law gives way to the blessings of Abraham. But it is more spiritual than physical and financial. "...so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith" ("And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the

nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Galatians 3:8,9).



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CANCER'S HERE!

Rev. Kuruvilla Chandy

My wife's mother died because of complications arising after surgery for cancer. My mother died of an inoperable, malignant brain tumour. My son was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma when he was just 25 years old. A few years ago, I found I have a type of blood cancer. Commonplace? Maybe not, but today, there is no family on earth that doesn't have someone near and dear who has cancer.

Sometimes, cancer strikes suddenly and because the discovery is late, nothing can be done, except to love the dying loved one and provide caring comfort. Often, though, if discovery is made early, there is the possibility of experiencing healing.

Symptoms occur warning people that all is not well with the body. To ignore these signs from God is utter foolishness.

When our son was diagnosed with cancer, the early detection and the immediate start of treatment went a long way in helping him beat the illness and keeping it at bay. Since then, I have made it my mission to urge folks to immediately seek diagnosis and treatment when they face health problems. Avoiding issues is not faith. Rather, it is foolishness that rebels against God's guidance.

Providence

Sometimes, people get upset that they couldn't achieve what they set out to do. But when we

calm down to look back, then we can see that the hand of God was preparing us to face our crisis.

If our son had got into a bachelor of technology programme or a master of computer application programme at some prestigious and reputed institution outside Lucknow, the on-campus interviews that take place when courses finish, would have taken him to other places for work. *If* he had jumped at our friend's offer to place him either at Chandigarh or New Delhi, he would have had a terrific opening right away. *If* he had taken a job outside Lucknow, the diagnosis and subsequent treatment would not have been timely. As a young person, given the fact that he was experiencing no distress (no fever, no pain, no weight-loss), he would have casually ignored the lumps he had discovered. In God's providence, he was kept at home by earlier disappointments. As the Bible says, "In all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

All things are not good and all things do not have the capability to work for good, though the *King James Version* suggests that in

Romans 8:28. What I have quoted above is the *New International Version* rendition: "In all things God works..." and He "works for the good of those who love Him" and "have been called according to His purpose." As the Christian mystic Francois Fenelon said, "A life of faith...enables us to see God in everything and it holds the mind in a state of readiness for whatever may be His will." Even when we are unaware of it, God is directing our lives. At times, we do not know that we have been under God's direction, until we look back. Take time to look back in wonder.

I do not for a moment suggest that when God blesses people it will always happen in this sort of way. In our son's case, this is the way God worked. If He had worked another way, He would have still done good, because God is good and does only what is good. But bad things do happen, because we live in a fallen, broken world. As Scripture says, "...Creation was subject to frustration...We know that the whole creation has been groaning...right up to the present time" (vv.20,22). Both sunshine and rain will come to everyone in

the normal course of life on earth (Matt.5:45), and so will health and sickness. However nothing that happens is comparable with "the glory that will be revealed" (Rom.8:18).

The Difference

Though there is no difference between the external circumstances of Christians and that of others, things are different on the inside for believers. When we agonise in the midst of adversity, we know that we do not have to feel all alone and be depressed or discouraged. "...We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as [children], the redemption of our bodies...the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (vv.23, 26). We do not suffer alone. We do not groan alone. We have the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit to aid us and carry us in the hour of trial.

No matter what happens, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God – neither trouble, nor hardship, nor persecution,

nor famine, nor nakedness, nor danger, nor sword. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vv.35-39).

This Scripture passage (Rom.8:18-39) has captured the essence of God's provision for the Christian. "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?" (vv.31-32).

Prayer Support

Some folks hide the fact that they are unwell. I have never been able to understand the logic of that. After all, sooner or later people will get to know.

Maybe some are secretive as a form of denial – hoping that if they don't talk about it, the trouble will go away. But it doesn't, does it?

I suppose some must have some

belief in the "evil eye" of ill-wishers. That is plain superstition. Anyway, what better way to fight the evil eye, than to surround oneself with those who will pray for us?

That is what we have done every time there has been a need for healing in our family. We believe in the power of prayer and the power of many praying together as one, because our Lord said, "If two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (Matt. 18:19).

God's Riches

Cancer treatments cost a lot. In our case, the Lord provided so much more than what we needed or asked for. How gracious our God is! He remains faithful even if we are faithless. He cannot deny Himself (2Tim.2:13).

Not for a moment do I suggest that God's blessings are measured in rupees. Sometimes God will take us through neediness so that we discover God riches. "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory" (Phil.4:19). Paul wrote, "I have learned to be content whatever the

circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learnt the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (vv.11-13). God deals with us individually according to what it is we need to learn in our personal lives. What one child of God needs to learn is not what everyone of God's children needs to learn.

Exactly how God responds to our material needs is also a matter of God's glory being at stake in a Christian's life. As Christians you and I exist for the sole purpose of bringing glory to God. "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor.10:31). Sometimes, God has to bless people by rescuing them from their circumstances. At other times, He gives them the strength to endure a trial. Either way people are blessed. Either way God is glorified.

Between Anguish and Faith

Standing by is the most difficult thing that caregivers do. Parent of children feel it acutely. They are supposed to kiss the pain away

for their children and they find that they are unable to.

A father said to Jesus, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" (Mk. 9:22). He had heard of Jesus healing various people of many different kinds of health problems. After all that, the man still said to Jesus, "If you can..." Jesus turned to the man and said, "If you can?" (v.23).

That is just like us today. We have read all the Bible stories of God's healing power, and heard testimonies of how God has healed people in our own time. Yet, we have our doubts. So often, we are still unable to affirm with the total assurance of unshakeable faith that miracles can and do happen.

We need to affirm that God knows everything, and God can do anything, and God is good, and God loves you and me. He knows everything there is to know about us and still loves us. All the power is His and He is goodness personified. His love focuses and directs all that power and goodness toward us. Why do we fear? Even when we do fear, we will not be rejected, but will instead hear Him say, Fear not!"

Jesus said, "Everything is possible for the one who believes" (v.23). Everything? Yes, everything!

The distressed father cried out, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (v.24). That cry strikes a responsive chord in my own heart and life. I have endured the tension of mixed feelings time and again. On the one hand, I believe in the omnipotent sovereignty of God. If I do not believe in His omnipotence and sovereignty, then my God would be small and weak, no better than manufactured gods who having eyes do not see the human condition, having ears do not hear prayers, having lips do not speak comfortingly, having feet do not move to be with you in your situation of need, and having hands do not touch you or lift you up. While on the one hand I believe in the almighty power of God, on the other hand I face the reality of troubles in my life. Somehow, while going through them troubles seem more real than the God who cannot be seen. During the time of trouble they seem greater in power than the God who seems so distant and removed.

Comforted to Comfort

The day after we learnt that our son had cancer, according to the Bible reading plan I followed, I came to 2 Corinthians 1:3-11. According to the wording of the New American Standard Bible, the phrase "so that" is used three times in this passage. Talking about the suffering he experienced, Paul said that God takes us through such experiences and comforts us "so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (v.4). Faith needs a context of vulnerability. Without it, faith seems artificial as though it does not belong in the real world. Manifesting faith in the midst of human vulnerability makes faith more real to people and they draw strength from it.

Secondly, God takes us through such experiences "so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead" (v.9). When things go well, humans have a tendency to forget that their lives are totally dependent on the grace of God. We take grace for granted most of the time. We need crisis experiences to keep us reminded that without

God's presence and power in our lives, we are as good as dead. When He enters, we live. Crises are experiences that increase our awareness of grace.

Finally, God gives us experiences of His grace "so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favour bestowed on us through the prayers of many" (v.11). The first part of verse eleven says, "You also joining in helping us through your prayers..." That was one source of strength for our family. So now we rejoice that many who prayed can join us in thanking God "for the favour bestowed through the prayers of many." Thank You, God! Thank you, people!

The Hem of His Garment

A woman with a persistent bleeding problem, in faith, touched the hem of Jesus' robe and was instantly healed (Lk.8:42-48).

In themselves, the clothes that Jesus wore had no healing powers. All the power was His alone. His clothes served only as a point of contact for a woman who showed faith. When she touched the hem of the robe that Jesus wore, she released her

own faith, and the healing power flowed from our Lord to her.

Jesus, our Lord, is still the Healer. Only He can heal. No doctor, nor medicines, nor surgery, nor any other medical procedures are able to accomplish healing. There is always an 'x' factor in illnesses and cures. That 'x' factor is God's will and power. Doctors and medicines are able to work a cure only when God wills it and empowers it. When God does not allow it, they do not work.

Since God Himself is the Healer, He may sometimes choose not to use medical means. People call such cures "miracles of divine healing". But that is not correct. All the cures, even the ones that use medical means, are instances of miraculous divine healing. When a disease is rolled back and recovery occurs it is always a miracle of God's power.

I do not believe that there is any sense in refusing to take medication when God has chosen not to heal without its use. After God has made known that He will not heal unless we use medicines or surgery, it is not a sign of faith to refuse medical

means. Rather it is a sign of foolishness.

The various systems of medicine are only the fringes of His presence and power. The knowledge of these systems comes entirely from God. Humans have only discovered the healing properties of herbs and roots, oils and minerals. It is God Himself who has invested them with their properties. It is also God who enabled their discovery.

The clothes that Jesus wore had no healing power. When the woman touched the hem of His garment, the power flowed from Jesus, not His robes. He did not say, "Who touched my clothes?" He said, "Who touched me?" When she touched His clothes, what she really did was to touch Jesus Himself.

Once we recognise that medical knowledge and healing properties all come from Him, then we will be given faith to reach out and touch the hem of His garment. When we reach for medical means in that frame of mind, we touch Him and the power flows from Him. They

become a way of touching Him in all His creative and healing power. We touch Him. He will know and He will ask, "Did you touch me, my child?"

Point of Contact

It was not Jesus who needed the woman to touch the hem of His robe. It was she who needed it as a point of contact. It does not matter to God what it is that we use as a point of contact for our faith's release. God does not need points of contact. It is we who need them to connect to His power.

There were times when Jesus used a medium to accomplish healing. He once used a paste made of saliva and mud to bring healing to a blind man (Jn. 9:6). Jesus did not need to use that medium, but He did use it. It was not for His own sake that Jesus did that. He did it for the blind man's sake.

There was another time when healing came to a man in stages. He did not experience instantaneous healing. Jesus spat on his eyes, laid hands on the man and asked, "Do you see anything?" The man replied, "I see men, for I see them like trees,

walking around." So Jesus laid His hands on the man's eyes again. This time the man began to see things clearly (Mk.8:22-25).

What Jesus did is so much like the routine an eye surgeon follows when a patient is ready to use his eyes after corrective surgery.

It is significant that this healing in stages occurred when Jesus used saliva that was believed to have medicinal properties. It was Jesus' way of letting us know that healing can come through various means and in different ways.

Sometimes...Heaven

Have you ever wondered about the case of the paralysed man to whom Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mk.2:3-5). His obvious need was healing for his physical condition. What did Jesus offer was healing for his spiritual condition. The man himself did not protest that Jesus was mocking his helplessness or that Jesus was nothing more than a fraud pretending to possess healing powers. I cannot believe that Jesus "used" the man to drive home the fact of His own divine authority and power. I

believe that in the first instance Jesus met the man right at the point of his own deepest need. Jesus thought that the man's first need was spiritual, and the man himself agreed. He lay there contented with the healing of his soul. In the end, when Jesus healed the man's body of paralysis, it was only to prove that He had the right to forgive (vv.10-11)

Sometimes, when you seek healing, it never comes. That too can be the providence of God. Consider the case of Joni Eareckson Tada. After a freak accident while swimming, she was left paralysed from the neck down. For years, she has had to have someone feed her and help her with every bodily need or function. During all this time, the Lord has been dealing with her and He has used her to touch others. I am sure that she has prayed for healing for her broken body. She touched the hem of the Lord's garment, and the power of God has flowed through her, but without removing any of her disabilities and brokenness.

In her book *Heaven*, Joni looks forward to healing that will come to her in the presence of God.

Whatever healing we would receive while on earth will not last forever. Jairus' daughter was raised to life by Jesus Himself, but still died one day. So did Lazarus and everyone else who was raised from death.

We will never be totally healed here. We have bodies that will one day grow sick of this world and long for that other life where there will be no pain that brings tears to our eyes. Here, when our tears are wiped away by human hands, they keep coming back from time to time when we are touched by disease, pain and sorrow. Our tears will stop only when God's hand wipes them away once and for all. What we suffer now is the sickness of longing for heaven.



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Bible Bhavan Christian Fellowship

A Bible preaching & teaching Church with a mission focus on North India

Invitation for posts of a youth pastor and a pastor

Applications are invited from men for the following posts at Bible Bhavan Christian Fellowship, New Delhi:

1. Youth Pastor (1 post)
2. Pastor (1 post)

Following are the criteria:

1. Degree: Graduation from a recognised theological college/seminary having attended the course in person (not by extension or online)
2. Marital status: Married
3. Experience: At least five years in ministry
4. Age: not older than 35 years for the Youth Pastor
5. Language skill: English and Hindi
6. A clear conviction of calling and dedication to serve as a pastor

Brief description of job and package

1. Working days:
 - Sunday is exclusively kept to serve the church. There is no option to skip attending the church even when there is no assignment in the services. As it is, Sundays are actually the busiest day of the week especially for the pastors.
 - Monday to Friday: Attending to pastoral needs of the church members and discipleship programmes under specific groups; teaching at Delhi Bible Institute; Administration; Programme Coordination; Technical roles depending on gifts and skills; Travel to regional centres; Attending Self-development Programmes; etc.
 - Christmas Break and Annual Holidays (not for the first year of working).
 - Sick leave and Casual Leave according to the working manual.
2. Housing will be provided which is located away from the office/church and well connected by public transport systems.
3. Salary will be discussed on being selected for the interview.

Application process:

1. Write an email to dbishaw@gmail.com with your resume stating your name, date of birth, marital status and family details (as applicable), educational qualification mentioning the names of the institutes, church, denomination, experiences, etc.
3. Include your testimony of faith in Christ.
4. We will ask for references if you are selected for the interview.
5. Contact details – mobile number, email ID, postal address, etc.

Further communications will be made on the basis of email received at dbishaw@gmail.com

Church Administrator
BBCF English

Date: 21 October 2021

Intercessory *Prayer* Points



November 2021

1 MONDAY Thank God for his protection over you and your family in the month of October. Welcome this new month with gratitude.

2 TUESDAY Pray for Doon Bible College, Uttarakhand. Pray that this college would continually groom, equip and empower men and women of God to witness Christ in the world.

3 WEDNESDAY Pray for Full Gospel Pentecostal Church, Tamil Nadu. FGPC is involved in Church planting, missionary family welfare and providing shelter, rehabilitation and orphanages to needy people. Pray that God would bless the ministry abundantly to display his unconditional love to mankind.

4 THURSDAY Pray for Kentwood Community Church, Maharashtra. Pray that the Lord would use this community church to shelter and feed many hungry and thirsty souls with His Word.

5 FRIDAY Pray for Kashmir

Evangelical Fellowship, Jammu & Kashmir. Pray that this organization would be the backbone of churches in J&K. Pray that God would give clear vision and insights to the leaders to lead believers according to His will.

6 SATURDAY Pray for the ministry of Evangelical Fellowship of India. Pray that EFI would continually be instrumental to reach the grass root gospel workers as well as the urban workers and be their voice to the world.

7 SUNDAY International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP). Pray for those who are persecuted/imprisoned because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Pray that God would comfort them and hear their cry and answer their prayers. Pray for the persecuted Churches all over the world today to stand strong in the Lord.

8 MONDAY Pray for religious liberty in our country. Pray that every individual would worship and share

the gospel without fear. Pray for safety and protection of your church today.

9 TUESDAY Pray for the persecuted churches in your state. Pray that they would draw strength from God and carry on the good works that they do. May God enable them to be bold and courageous as they share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray for growth of faith as they go through persecution.

10 WEDNESDAY Pray for Shammah Ministries international, Telangana. Shammah Ministries International is involved in church planting, women & children ministries and also for the poor & underprivileged. Pray that God would provide all the means to reach out to these groups so that Christ's love would be embedded in those to whom they minister.

11 THURSDAY Pray for the suffering servants of God to be encouraged, emboldened and courageous. Pray that nothing would dampen their spirit to serve their Almighty God with undivided heart.

12 FRIDAY Pray for the victims of physical abuses. Pray for justice. Pray for healing both emotional and physical. Pray for the strength to forgive and move forward.

13 SATURDAY Continue to pray for AIM magazine. Pray for all the writers to have new insights and

appropriate words to express their thoughts as they write. Pray for their homes and relationships to be protected and blessed by the Lord.

14 SUNDAY Today is National Children's Day. Thank God for the children in our lives who have made our lives so worth living. Thank God for His hands of protection over them. Pray that every child in our country would enjoy their childhood and love God with all their hearts.

15 MONDAY Pray for The Transformational Movement, Gujarat. Pray that this organization would be an effective transformational agent that would bring changes. Pray that they would display God's attributes in all that they do.

16 TUESDAY Pray for effective ministry to spread the love of God during this difficult time. Pray also for people would have fresh awareness of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ and live for Him.

17 WEDNESDAY Pray for Covenant Life, New Delhi. Pray for this new church to be blessed and be used by God to reach many unreached people in the city of Delhi and NCR and beyond.

18 THURSDAY Pray for our nation. every citizen would enjoy their fundamental rights and carry out their responsibilities with gratitude.

19 FRIDAY Pray that every child in

this country would get affordable yet good education. Pray for your child(ren) that they would love to gain knowledge and live their life with great potential, effectively for the Lord.

20 SATURDAY Pray for the ministries that are reaching out to the next generation today. Pray that the Lord would give them appropriate tools for every challenge that young people would love God despite worldly trends and influences.

21 SUNDAY Pray for the evangelists and missionaries that the Gospel would reach the remotest corner of the state. Pray for God's light to shine and dispel darkness.

22 MONDAY Pray for Capital Pastors Fellowship, Chattisgarh. Pray that the Holy Spirit would anoint, comfort and strengthen all the members of this fellowship. May God mightily use them for the extension of his kingdom.

23 TUESDAY Let us continue to pray for our nation that Christ's light may shine brightly and that more and more people may see the love of God and develop a greater desire to know Him.

24 WEDNESDAY Pray for the Junior Church or the Junior Sunday School program in your church. Pray for the teachers to be well-trained and spirit anointed. Pray for

the children to diligently learn all the basic teachings of the Bible so that they may build their life upon it.

25 THURSDAY Pray for the Mennonite Church in India, Chattisgarh. Pray that the church would be vibrant and over-flowing with spiritual blessings. Pray that the church members would grow in Christ-like character as they live out their faith.

26 FRIDAY Pray for Full Gospel Farm Ministries, Maharashtra. Pray that this mission agency would be instrumental in bringing change in people's lives. Pray that God would abundantly bless their ministry.

27 SATURDAY Pray for yourself today. Pray that you would have quality time to spend meaningfully with the Lord and that you would hear Him speak to you personally.

28 SUNDAY Pray that fear would be replaced with faith as believers' worship and serve God despite many challenges. Pray for protection. Pray also for God's provision and intervention so that believers would worship in peace.

29 MONDAY Pray for your city today. Pray that God would heal the sick and comfort the bereaved. Pray also that you would be a blessing to many people in your city.

30 TUESDAY Thank God for the month of November. Pray for a blessed new month.

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Published date on 25 October 2021
Posting date 26/27 October 2021

RNI. Regd. No. 19728/70 / Postal
Registration No. DL(S)-01/3241/2018-20
Licensed to post without prepayment at
NDPSO New Delhi -110 002 / U(SE)-9/2018-20



Evangelical
Fellowship of
India



One in God; Together for Good.

Introduction

Evangelical Fellowship of India, founded in 1951, is the national alliance of Evangelicals in India. As a central network of evangelicals and a service organization, it is the custodian of Evangelical faith, movement and values in India, representing the Evangelical voice, building capacity and promoting participation in nation building.

EFI is a charter member of the World Evangelical Alliance. Its membership includes over 65,000 Churches, over 150 Church related mission agencies and organisations and thousands of individual members.

Our Vision

To see evangelical Churches, institutions and individuals effectively witnessing the good news of Jesus Christ in word, deed and transforming nation.

Our Mission

As an evangelical alliance, serve churches, institutions and individuals through strategic initiatives, capacity building and forging solidarity, thus facilitating the mission of witnessing to the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed, and nation building.

Networks

- CEEFI (Christian Education Department of EFI)
- EFI Publication & Media
- EFI National Centre for Urban Transformation
- EFI Children @ Risk
- Evangelical Trust Association of North India
- EFI Micro Enterprise Development
- Evangelical Financial Accountability Council (EFAC)

Commissions

- EFI Women Commission
- EFI Theological Commission
- EFI Youth Commission
- EFI Religious Liberty Commission
- EFI Commission on Relief (EFICOR)

EFI is a Charter Member of the World Evangelical Alliance
An NGO in special consultative Status with the Economic & Social Council of the United Nations

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Printed & Published by Mr. Vijayesh Lal, on behalf of EFI Publication Trust,
805/92 Deepali Building, Nehru Place, New Delhi - 110 019.
Printed at Royal Press, B-82, Okhla Phase -1, New Delhi - 110 020.
Editor Mr. Vijayesh Lal