

# Stand!

"Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"

(2 Timothy 3:12) (NLT)

## Broken but still in His Hands

### INSIDE:

03 | Restoring the Broken – Sri Lanka

04 | Secret Place

06 | Biblical Affliction – Then and Now (3)

08 | 445 Days in Prison – (2)



Dear Valued Supporter,

We are pleased to enclose the 10th edition of our magazine STAND!

Why STAND! By the power of His strength, we aspire to stand firmly through the storms that are sweeping through Asia and the world.

Our hearts are grieved to hear of the loss of so many innocent lives in Sri Lanka during Easter Sunday this year. Many are still suffering the effects of loss, shock and trauma from the senseless attacks.

Please join us in praying that God will heal the hearts, bodies and souls of the grieving families and those injured in the attack.

We pray that you will consider financially supporting this project, **"Restoring the Broken – Sri Lanka"** to bring relief and aid to your fellow Christian brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka.

**STAND!**

Standing for Persecuted Christians!

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Blessings!

For donations to **GOSHEN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES LIMITED** :-

Bank Transfer to OCBC Bank Code : 7339 Account : 508-308962-001 Pay Now : UEN No. 198204059M

By Cheque issued in favour of **GOSHEN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES LIMITED**

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*(For all donations please inform us via email to [admin@gosheninternational.org](mailto:admin@gosheninternational.org) or call 6456 0042 to facilitate our accountability to you.)*

*What we can do for Churches:*

We are able to conduct talks and hold booths and activities to help raise awareness of the plight of persecuted Christians. Contact us at 6456-0042 or email : [admin@gosheninternational.org](mailto:admin@gosheninternational.org) for more information.



*To get a soft copy of the Stand!, just scan this QR code which will lead you directly to Goshen International Ministries' website.*



## RESTORING THE BROKEN – SRI LANKA

TARGET FUNDS TO BE RAISED: **\$S13,000.00**

(PRIORITY: URGENT)

**Sri Lanka was rocked by a series of explosions on the morning of Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019.**

The bombings targeted worship services in 3 churches and breakfast buffets at 3 hotels.

In response, many churches cancelled evening services that day and the government of Sri Lanka imposed a 12-hour island-wide curfew.

The horrific attack, perpetrated by suicide bombers, left a death toll of about 310 and injured around 500 others. The explosion at the Zion Church in Batticaloa at around 9.10 am resulted in the deaths of 28 people, including 14 children under the age of 14 while over 100 worshippers were killed in the explosion at St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo.

As a result of the attack, many families were shattered by the loss of children and the loss of one or both parents and bread winners in the family. Those who were injured during the attack need help with short and long-term medical expenses.

We, at Goshen International Ministries Ltd, are raising funds to support families who have lost their means of income and to help injured survivors to pay for short and long-term medical expenses.

We hope that you will prayerfully consider giving to the Lord in support of this project of bringing some much-needed relief to the needy ones among those families who are affected by this tragedy. As an act of Christian love and kindness, we pray that you would consider joining us to play a small part in restoring and re-building families.

“Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else” (2 Corinthians 9:13). 🙏

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*(In the event the target fund is reached, any excess will be channelled to the general fund towards persecuted Christians)*

# SECRET PLACE

“The Parable of the Prodigal is one of the parables of Jesus told in Luke 15:11–32.

In the story, a father has two sons. The younger son asked the father to give him his inheritance in advance even while his father was still alive. The father grants his son's request. However, this younger son is a prodigal and squandered away his inheritance, eventually becoming destitute. He returns home empty-handed and intends to beg his father to accept him back as a servant. To the son's surprise, he is not scorned by his father but is welcomed back into the fold with celebration and fanfare. Envious, the older son refuses to participate in the festivities. The father reminds the older son that one day he will inherit everything and that they should celebrate the return of the younger son because he was lost and is now found.”

Down through the years, evangelists have cited this parable in their sermons, winning many souls into the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately, many believers remain as a prodigal son even after accepting Christ into their life. How can that be? Why?

***If you lead a prayerless life, you are also likened to a prodigal son.***



*The Return of the Prodigal Son (1773)  
by Pompeo Batoni*

Take a moment to ponder this parable. When the younger son walks out of his father's house, it signifies not only a departure from the guardianship and covering of his father but also a total cessation of communication with his father. No more wise counsel from his father, he is left isolated, having to fend for himself and open to all kinds of attacks from wolves lurking out there in the world.

Are you feeling like that today? You accepted Christ many years ago, but the newfound joy of knowing Christ is extinguished by the daily grind of a busy and hectic lifestyle. You are struggling with a demanding job and unstable relationships. The pressures of life has taken a toll on you. You are tired and burned out. You have no time to pray. **You are experiencing spiritual dryness.**

Do you yearn for the rekindling of that first love for Christ?

The good news is that God the Father, in all His love and mercy, has not abandoned you at all.

He is the same yesterday, today and forever. As I write this, I can hear His voice saying to you, *"My child, I know your name and I love you dearly. Come. I have waters if you are thirsty, I have wine and milk if you are hungry"* (Isaiah 55:1). *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* (Matthew 11:30).

Make a decision today to return to His presence. Set aside a regular time every day to pray. It may be tough at first to discipline yourself to pray on an ongoing basis, but if you persevere, you will discover the immense joy and fulfilment that no other endeavour will.

**Don't procrastinate anymore! The price you pay for spending time with God is small compared to the joyful delights you will find in His Presence. It is all worth it. Do it today.**

*"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me"* (Revelation 3:20).

If we want to distil it to a nutshell, what exactly is prayer?

Christianity is not a religion but a relationship with God. A love relationship needs time to nurture and deepen.

Prayer is simply spending time alone with God. It is a "secret place" where you can tell Him what's in your heart and be totally transparent to Him because God accepts you for who you are.



It is a place where you can read and ponder over His Word and His promises in the Bible and wait for His revelations regarding your current difficult situations. At the same time, you will receive direction, encouragement and comfort. As you draw near to God, He will reveal Himself and speak to you through His Word. He enjoys it when we sing a love song to Him out of a grateful attitude for salvation and for His love.

The more time you spend in the secret place, an unspeakable inner peace and joy will fill your heart and mind and you will miraculously be transformed more and more into Christ's likeness.

**Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face and the things of this earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.**

*"Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"* (Philippians 4:6).

*"Put on your new nature and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like Him"* (Colossians 3:10). 🍏



## BIBLICAL AFFLICTION – THEN & NOW (3)

– by Stephen McIlroy

**In times of intense, incessant and unabating persecution are you tempted to give up your new found faith in Christ and return to the old rites and rituals of your former faith just so that you can escape persecution?**

The book of Hebrews shows us the superiority of Christ and that He is more than sufficient and better than anything mere adherence to religious rituals. It encourages us not to turn away from our only hope of salvation even at the expense of persecution.

**Advertise** (Hebrews 4: 14-16)

During the time when the book of Hebrews was written, the Stoics had gods who were feeling-less and the Epicureans had gods who were detached from humanity. By contrast, the Christians of the

first century held to the belief that their God chose to enter the world as a human being to identify with ordinary people. In doing so, the Son of God experienced the entire gamut of emotions that ordinary people experience in life – joys, sorrows, hardships, difficulties, rejections.

The writer to the Hebrews wants his readers to know God's greatness. They were familiar with the function of the High Priest, who at one and the same time must know both man and God. It was he who interceded between God and man, expressing human petitions and supplications to the Divine Creator.

The writer says because Jesus experienced what it is like to be a human, He is able to fully identify with us humans. He was like us in all things – except that He did not sin. What a God!

He knew the depths, tensions and assaults of temptation. We see Him making “not merely an appeal for endurance but an exhortation to fearless witness. Don't be robbed of your faith, advertise it. Hold it fast & hold it forth” (Raymond Brown).

Many new believers in some of the parts of the world boldly advertise their faith in Jesus. In so doing, they witnessed many in their communities come to Christ. Like their Saviour, some of these new believers have considered the cost of discipleship. Some will bear the scars of their bold witness for Christ. Some may even lose their lives in the process, like so many are currently experiencing in north-east Nigeria. Little has changed from then until now.

### Rebel (Hebrews 7: 1-4)

During the first century, many steadfastly held on to tradition. By contrast, the author of Hebrews encourages his readers to hold fast to the Scriptures so that they will be able to find fulfilment in the promises of God. For centuries, He had instructed His people to perform certain ordained sacrifices for sin.

The writer explains to his readers that we are now presented with a new and living sacrifice. All the previous animal sacrifices were merely pointing to the reality of Jesus' one sacrifice for all sin.

Not only was Jesus the sacrifice for our sins, He has also become the Great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (melchi=king, tzedek=righteous). Unlike the Aaronic priests who were subjected to the power of death, the Great High Priest Jesus can never die a second time. Neither does He have to relinquish His High Priestly role to mortal men.

At that time, a pious Jew who rejects the efficacy of the institution of the Aaronic high priesthood would be deemed to be a rebel. Jews who substituted their trust in the Aaronic high priesthood for a trust in the efficacy and power of Jesus' High Priesthood were considered rebels or apostates.

In a number of cultures today, many of those who turn to Jesus are considered to be rebels

because they have chosen to turn away from trusting in the rites and rituals of their backgrounds. Because they are considered to have turned away from their cultural norms, many find themselves being ostracised by their families and the larger communities of which they used to be a part. These new believers suffer oppression of various sorts, some even to the point of being threatened by family members and influential members of their community. Little has changed from then until now.

### Love (Hebrews 13: 1-4)

Brotherly love should display a mutual regard for others, despite race, ethnicity, wealth, social status, background, appearance. Such brotherly love should be characteristic of Christians. According to the writer of the book of Hebrews, to welcome strangers and show compassion to the suffering are some ways of showing brotherly love.

Firstly, he exhorts the family of God to welcome strangers because in doing so, some have welcomed angels without even being aware of it. At that time, many were strangers in foreign lands because they had to flee persecution. They needed to be shown hospitality (perhaps to avoid sinful inns, where prostitutes operated and where inn-keepers would take advantage of strangers by charging exorbitant rates).

Secondly, many followers of Jesus were imprisoned and needed food and encouragement. They may be out of sight but the writer of Hebrews encourages his readers that these needy ones must certainly not be forgotten.

Christians may at some point in time in their lives find themselves in such circumstances. Therefore, we always ought to remember the many prisoners of faith and allow God to develop His compassion in us toward those who are suffering for Jesus's sake. If we are found doing this, we are demonstrating love towards the brethren, for little has changed from then until now.

*“You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised”* (Hebrews 10:36). 🍏



## 445 DAYS IN PRISON - (2)



**After a few weeks in that cell, God brought Revelation 4:8 to my mind of the four living creatures ... do not rest day or night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come!"**

In my mind I began to repeat that verse over and over. As I recited the verse, I began to focus on specific attributes of God and I would pray for the healing of Christians who had been injured in attacks in Nigeria and for Christians in a north-east African country who had been imprisoned for more than a decade. I began to focus on God's holiness and power instead of on my own situation.

***Then things in my prison cell changed for the worse.***

My cellmates made it very clear that as a Christian, I was of little value. They began calling me "filthy rat" and all kinds of nasty names. At first, I refused to answer. That's not my name, I thought and I won't dignify it

with a response. But when I didn't answer, they hit me with a broom handle and forced me to stand in a corner of the cell for hours at a time. Then they began to punch and kick me.

They also questioned me about the Christian work I was doing in the country. If they didn't like my answer, they hit me. As they slapped and kicked me, I thought of how Jesus was beaten with wooden sticks by the Roman soldiers. One particular beating, a 400-pound guy kicked me with his shoes on, was so painful that I thought I had a broken rib.

Despite this physical abuse, I realised God was performing a miracle. I had peace! I could even think about my family and pray for them without breaking down in tears. God was with me!

My cell mates soon increased the pressure on me. One of them slowly sharpened the edge of a metal plate



while threatening to slit my throat. They also attempted to torture me with “waterboarding” because, they said, the Czech Republic had cooperated with the United States in waterboarding detainees of their faith. As they collected water to pour on my face and prepared to tie me up, a guard who had overheard their plans opened the cell door and moved me to another cell. I believe that guard was sent by the Lord to save my life that day.

### Another Month in Prison

On the 10th of each month since my arrest which marked the monthly anniversary of my arrest, I struggled with discouragement and depression. “How long, oh Lord, will You leave me here?” I asked. “How long will you keep me separated from Wanda and our children? How much more can I endure?”



God answered my questions on the 10th of April 2016, by which time I had been moved from the high-security prison run by the local intelligence agency to a regular prison. That night, when 14 new prisoners were added to my already overcrowded cell, God distinctly led me to talk with these new prisoners and share my testimony with them.

The new prisoners were from a north-east African country that I had visited for VOM. They had been captured while passing through this central African country as they fled their oppressive homeland. After getting to know them a little, I shared my testimony and introduced them to the gospel. Several of them listened closely and two of them made a decision to follow Christ. The next morning, all 14 were transferred out of the prison and I never saw them again. But I’m confident that I’ll see at least two of them again in heaven.

The Lord had turned that 10th day of the month, normally a day of discouragement and depression, into a day of ministry and celebration. From that day onward, I dedicated my prison time to the Lord. “If You will allow me opportunities to share the gospel, I will stay here as long as You want!” I prayed.

I experienced a radical change of heart, no longer fretting about my trial and how long I would be in prison. In fact, I even stopped praying that I would be released from prison. ***I simply focused on the people God placed in my path each day and asked Him to use me to build His kingdom while I was in prison.***

Later in April I received a visit from a Czech Republic embassy official, who brought me a much-appreciated Czech Bible. After almost five months without God’s Word, I was hungry! Finally, I could dive into the Scriptures. I could read my Bible only in the daytime, when natural light entered my cell, so I read it from 8 in the morning until about 4 in the afternoon



every day. I had to read standing up, leaning against the prison bars so the light from the tiny opening would fall across the pages. I was so hungry that I read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in just three weeks, just reading for hours each day.

As I came across different passages that God had brought to mind during my long months without a Bible, it was like finding a pearl or receiving a loving embrace from God. I scratched those special references into my cell wall so I could quickly return to verses like 1 Cor 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

Two local pastors were being tried at the same time as I was. They were placed in a cell across from mine, so we would call out verses to each other across the hall.

Eventually, the three of us and another local man, who had served as my translator, were transferred to a prison where there was a Christian chapel. The Christians in that prison met almost daily, so the pastors and I had many opportunities to minister and study God's Word together. What a sweet fellowship it was!

Our trial dragged on, month after month, with court hearings being held only once a week. We were loaded into the back of a truck and driven for one hour on hot, dusty roads to the courthouse in the centre of the capital city. Sometimes we would arrive as scheduled only to learn that the judge had cancelled the day's hearings or that there was no electricity in the courthouse. Then we would turn around and drive back to the prison.

**“OUR FELLOW CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS WERE A GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT AT THESE HEARINGS. OFTEN, THEY WOULD GATHER OUTSIDE THE COURTHOUSE, RISKING THEIR OWN ARREST, TO SING HYMNS AS WE WERE LED INTO THE COURTHOUSE.”**

We never felt alone. Not only God but also His body, the church, was standing boldly with us during our trial.

## Life in Prison

On 29 January 2017, we gathered in the courtroom to hear the verdict in our case. I was found guilty on multiple charges and sentenced to life in prison, which under the law of that land means 20 years. The additional convictions, however, added another four years to my sentence.

While I had fully expected to be found guilty, hearing the judge say “life in prison” hit me hard. Would I survive 20 more years in prison? Would I ever see my family again? What would they think when they heard these terrible words? But I also took comfort in the promise I had made to God. I had told Him that I was willing to stay in prison as long as He would use me. Clearly, He had a plan for me there.

## The Lord Has Done Great Things for us

After our conviction and sentencing, we were moved to another Prison, which was supposed to be the preferred site for “political” prisoners. On 23 Feb 2017, I sat in the prison yard reading Psalm 126. Within seconds of finishing the Psalm, the prison commander approached me and said, “Petr, you are getting released today.” I felt like I was dreaming!



In God’s faithfulness, He again had prepared me for the happy news a few seconds earlier in the Psalm. The first letter I had written to my family included these words of encouragement, “Please be strong in the Lord and trust Him that He is in control. He is the One that has keys for my cell.” After 445 days in prison, God used those keys to open my cell door. Three days later, I was sitting on an airplane next to the foreign minister of the Czech Republic, about to leave the airport where I had first received that tap on the shoulder.

I’m so thankful for those who prayed for me and my family during my time in prison. Returning to my home after being sentenced to life in prison has given me an interesting perspective. Although I gave my life to Christ when I was 15 years old, I think it has more meaning now when I say, “Lord, the rest of my life is Yours. You brought me out of prison. You saved me from a life sentence. The rest of my life is Yours; it is in Your hands. Here I am. I want to serve You for the rest of my life.”

This is my decision – I will seek the will of the Lord and do whatever He wants me to do until I go to meet Him one day. 🙏

## Goshen International Ministries' Purposes

We aim to actively engage with our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ in Asia and beyond : praying with them, standing with them, helping them and learning lessons of true discipleship with them.

### Goshen Events in July/August 2019

Held at One Twenty Ministry

Date / Day / Time	Venue	Event
Thursday 7.30pm - 10pm (11 <sup>th</sup> July & 15 <sup>th</sup> Aug)	170 Upper Bukit Timah Road #19-01 Bukit Timah Shopping Centre, Singapore 588179	<b>GOSHEN PRAYER MEETING</b> for Persecuted Christians.

In the event of any changes after distribution of this issue, kindly look out for updates on Goshen's Facebook page

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