

Stand!

"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22b) (NIV)

BEATEN and JAILED... but not broken

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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 May/June 2019

Held at One Twenty Ministry

Date / Day / Time	Venue	Event
Thursday 7.30pm - 10pm (9 th May & 13 th June)	170 Upper Bukit Timah Road #19-01 Bukit Timah Shopping Centre, Singapore 588179	GOSHEN PRAYER MEETING for Persecuted Christians.

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

Goshen International Ministries Limited is a non-denominational charity serving the afflicted church in Asia and beyond. We are incorporated under the Charities and Companies Act of the Republic of Singapore.

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Dear Valued Supporter,

We are pleased to enclose the 9th 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.

In recent times, persecution of Christians have been on the rise and intensifying all over the world. In India alone there were 77 recorded incidents of persecution in the first two months of 2019 – up from 49 cases over the same period last year. It is in times such as these that the Body of Christ should unite together to pray and stand with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who are going through the fiery ordeals of persecution and affliction in our region.

We pray that you will consider supporting this ministry financially so as to enable us to continue to minister to your fellow Christian brothers and sisters in the persecuted church.

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** :-

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(For all donations please inform us via email to 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 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.



DIFFUSER OF THE FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST 3

GENESIS 32:27

In wrestling with the angel of God who is the LORD himself, God asked Jacob 'What is your name?'

Why did God ask Jacob a question to which He already knew the answer? God obviously knew Jacob's name from the very day he was formed in his mother's womb? So, what is the significance of this question?

To me, God was asking Jacob who he really was - the real person inside him. When Jacob answered, "My name is Jacob", it was as if Jacob was confessing, "Oh God I am a deceiver. I was a cheat even from birth. I deceived my father when I pretended to be Esau. I intentionally cheated Esau of his birthright and most of all, I snatched someone else's blessings".

Today God may be asking you the same question, "What is your name?". What are you made of?

What are the 'old wineskins' you are still struggling with and not willing to let go of? (Mark 2:22)

Have you surrendered and yielded them to God? Take a minute to ask God to search your heart today?

The Lord gave Jacob a new name and with it a new destiny and purpose. Jacob's faith and strength were renewed after he met the true and living God. He was assured that God will be with him so he was no longer afraid of the 400 soldiers Esau sent to meet him, neither was he afraid of what they would do to him.

Eventually, Jacob humbled himself before Esau and reconciled with his brother. What a beautiful picture of faith, mercy and the grace of God! Jacob had a flawed character, yet God was merciful toward him and accorded him the grace which he did not deserve. As a result, Jacob was transformed by the love of God.

Similarly, Christ has given us a new name, a new destiny and the gift of eternal life through his death and resurrection on the cross. Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Therefore, my friends, let's intentionally put on this new "wineskin" in Christ so that a new level of faith will arise in us. We have met God for the veil has been broken. We can now enter the very presence of God the Father for what Jesus has done for us, I pray that this new level of faith in Christ will fear no man just like Jacob, especially in the face of those who can kill the body but not the soul. Matthew 10:28

Sharing about the persecuted and afflicted church:

Believers in Asia, especially Iran, Pakistan, India and China are amazingly bold Christians:

- Asia Bibi, imprisoned on death row for more than 9 years on charges of blasphemy was eventually acquitted in 2018. However, she continually face death threats.
- Pastor Dan, faced daily threats of attack and persecution wherever he travelled to minister the Word of God.
- Pastor Sam in India was attacked for preaching God's Word in his church, yet he refuses to deny Christ.
- Believers hunted down by the extremist group ISIS chose to be beheaded rather than deny Christ. Many pastors and believers in other parts of the region were similarly attacked, kidnapped, tortured, raped, sold, closely watched & monitored. Some even had to lay down their very own lives for the Lord. Yet, they all stood firm in their faith in Christ. To these brave believers, diffusing the fragrance of Christ is a way of life.

In honor of our beloved brethren who have been persecuted for their faith, let us join hands to pray for them from Psalm 91:

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day,

nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked.

If you say, "The LORD is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;

they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

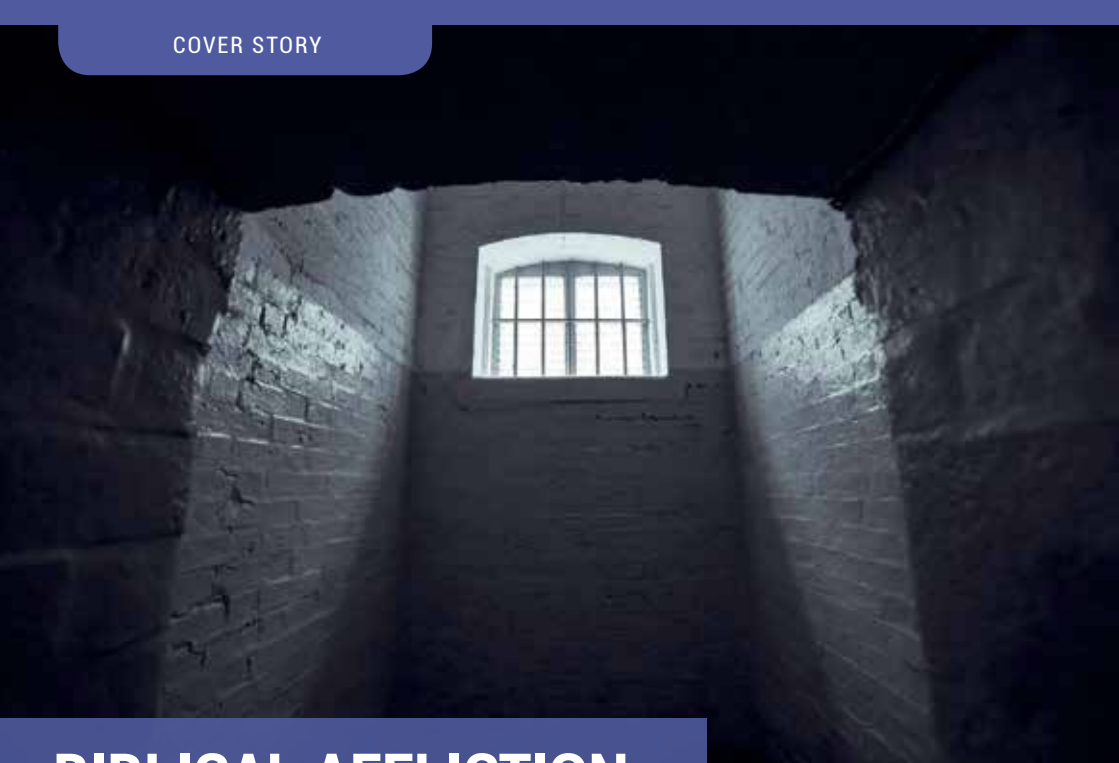
"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.

With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

In Jesus' mighty Name, amen!

Blessings to all. 🙏



BIBLICAL AFFLICTION – THEN & NOW (2)

– by Stephen McIlroy

Does it surprise you that though times have changed, there has been no change in the way believers are being persecuted and afflicted?

In the book of Mark chapters 14 to 15, we see the total submission of Jesus to the heavenly Father's will, the cowardice of the persecutors and why it may be necessary for believers in heavily-persecuted lands to keep a low profile during certain periods of time in accordance to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Submission (Mark 14:32-42)

The meeting place was in the seclusion of the garden of Gethsemane, known for its olives. To access the garden, Jesus and His eleven disciples must exit Jerusalem & cross the Kidron Valley. This was the place where idols had been crushed by previous kings of Judah, where many deaths took place due to brutal fighting and was the exit route for King David when he was fleeing for his life from his son, Absalom. Little wonder then, that some Hebrew traditions called this place the valley of the shadow of death.

Jesus must now “walk through the valley of the shadow of death”, but He will “fear no evil” as God’s angels would ultimately “comfort” Him (Psalm 23). The comfort of God’s angels would be desperately needed as Jesus was in spiritual and mental agony while Peter, James & John slept nearby. The cry of “ABBA” seemed almost like the voice of a desperate child intimately calling on His father for help. YHWH is a person, a Father, not an abstraction, and submission to the Father’s will was the only path that Jesus desired to take even though He knew that it was going to be difficult. He knew that if human beings were to be saved from the eternal consequences of sin, He must drink the cup of God’s wrath down to its very dregs.

For Christians, obedience to YHWH may mean suffering the loss of comfort, convenience, reputation, even their own lives. There is a cost to our discipleship, as can be attested to by so many in North Korea today. Many of these dear believers are destined for hardship in labour camps and prisons because they prefer to submit to their Heavenly Father rather than to godless and abusive authorities. Little has changed between then and now.

Mobs (Mark 14 : 43-50)

Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve disciples, chosen by Jesus, to walk closely with Him. He was constantly with Jesus and witnessed the miraculous acts Jesus performed, yet he still betrayed Jesus. How was that possible? What was going on inside his mind?

This disloyalty was epitomised by a touch and a kiss, something which a loyal disciple would never do unless his Rabbi first initiated the action. More unfaithfulness and impertinence is further evidenced by how he spoke to Jesus even before Jesus, the Master, opened His mouth to speak. Judas arrived with a cowardly mob consisting of those who didn’t have the courage to speak to Jesus personally. It would have been much easier for them to arrest Jesus in the Temple grounds where He had been for the entirety of the previous week. Instead they chose to sneak in under the cover of darkness, and away from the crowds.

The gangsters who recently attacked the Doulos Bible School in Indonesia behaved in much the same way as the unruly mob who created a scene in front of Jesus the day that Judas betrayed Him. According to news reports, a large crowd of gangsters approached the school under the cover of night, set it on fire before violently pouncing on unsuspecting students inside the school. Similar things have happened elsewhere in Sumatra. Little has changed between then and now.

Secrecy (Mark 15 : 42-47)

Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy, righteous Hebrew. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, who wined & dined with the upper echelons of Roman society. As a member of the Sanhedrin, he was supposed to take part in the vote whose resolution was to prosecute Jesus for violating their customary regulations.

Much to his credit, the gospel accounts tell us that he decided not cave in to the pressures of his day. Unlike the other members of the Sanhedrin, Joseph of Arimathea decided not to vote against the Lord Jesus. On top of that, after the Lord had been crucified on the cross, he even courageously went up to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus. In doing so, he revealed his reason for abstaining from the vote – he believed that Jesus is the Messiah spoken of by the Old Testament prophets of times past!

“IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CULTURAL TRADITION OF HIS TIME, FOR JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA TO CLAIM JESUS’ BODY AFTER HE WAS CRUCIFIED WAS TANTAMOUNT TO IDENTIFYING HIMSELF WITH THE CRUCIFIED CRIMINAL.”

In the eyes of the Jews of that time, the act of burial became a form of great ‘chesed’ (ie. lovingkindness), especially so if the deceased could not be personally thanked. The apostle John tells us that, like Nicodemus, Joseph had up to that point in time, been a secret disciple. It was the circumstances of the crucifixion and its aftermath that gave Joseph of Arimathea the opportunity to publicly take his stand as a true believer of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Likewise, many disciples living in heavily-persecuted lands today are exposed to the dangers of following Christ. Christians in these lands have to count the cost of what it means to worship and follow Him. Happily, many have decided that it is far better to follow Christ than to deny Him. They may have to practice their faith secretly for now but, like Joseph of Arimathea, they also know that there may come a point of time in the future when the Holy Spirit will lead them to publicly declare themselves as Christians and take their stand as devoted followers of the Lord. Little has changed between then and now.

Knowing that there are similarities suffered by believers back then and those afflicting many persecuted Christians today, are you willing, for the sake of the Gospel, to submit to the Heavenly Father, even if your decision would cost you your own life or the lives of your loved ones? Are you willing to lose everything you have for the sake of being among those who count it a privilege to stand for Christ? 🌱

... to be continued

ANNUAL SUPPORTERS' GATHERING

ON 14 FEBRUARY 2019



Thank You

We would like to thank all our supporters and volunteers for making this event such a successful one. It was an awesome gathering of like-minded people with the same devotion and passion for the Lord.

Thank you for supporting us financially and praying alongside us for our persecuted brethren, especially for JJ's children in the *Save The Children* project.

Last year, we met AJ who shared with us how his brother, JJ and his family were persecuted for their faith in Christ, and how JJ gave up his life in exchange for the release of his 7-year old son who was kidnapped by their persecutors. Since then, AJ has been trying to relocate all three of the late JJ's children to UK so that they can be reunited with relatives but was faced with mounting legal fees and many obstacles.



We raised a total of SGD \$10,000 for AJ to help defray some of these costs. We had the pleasure of presenting a cheque of the same amount to the VP & CFO of Voice of the Martyrs who collected it on behalf of AJ.

Let us *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2) and *"Let each of you look out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others"* (Philippians 2:4). 🌱



445 DAYS IN PRISON - (1)



When the airport security officer tapped me on the shoulder and motioned for me to follow him, I didn't think much of it. It was December 10, 2015 and I was heading home after spending four days in a central African country meeting with Christians and evaluating how Voice of The Martyrs ("VOM") could help the church there. With my boarding pass in hand, I assumed I was merely being given an extra security screening at the airport.

Everything seemed routine ... until the officer spread several photographs before me on a table. I stared in shock at photos taken of me outside my hotel and other photos of me at a restaurant where I had shared a meal with a local pastor. Clearly, I had been under surveillance by the local police ever since entering the country.

I looked nervously at my watch. My plane was about to take off and I wasn't going to be on it. Instead, I was being falsely charged with multiple crimes, including espionage and entering Sudan illegally.

Prepared for Suffering

I grew up as the son of a pastor in the communist world where pastors and their churches were closely monitored and authorities pressured families to enrol their children in classes that indoctrinated them with communist doctrine. While my father's official job was to pastor a state-approved church, he and my mother took it upon ourselves to train Christians gathered in a network of unregistered house churches across the country.

My father experienced harassment as a pastor even to the point of being arrested for doing nothing other than to undertake what in free countries would pass for normal Christian ministry. My brothers and sisters and I were all harassed at school for refusing to join the communist Young Pioneers movement and to wear the communist group's tell-tale red scarf. By God's grace, however, I came to know Christ at age 15.

When I was a teenager, my father handed me a copy of Richard Wurmbrand's book one *In God's Underground* with the accompanying words, "You should read this." That was how I

got to know Richard Wurmbbrand, founder of the organisation I now work for. 40 years on and I was handed another of his books, *If Prison Walls Could Speak* to read – while I was sitting in this African prison.

Although both my father and mother were occasionally detained because of their Christian work, we felt that it was an honour to suffer persecution in the name of Christ (Phil 1:29). Despite the pressure we faced as Christians under a communist government, we always knew that our brothers and sisters in other countries – free countries – were trying to support us. We never lacked for anything.

Years later, as I reflected on my childhood from this African prison cell, it became very clear that ever since I was a young boy, God had been preparing me for that tap on the shoulder at the airport.

In a Cell With ISIS

After confiscating my camera and laptop, authorities at the airport questioned me for almost 24 hours. They wanted to know about every photo and every person I had met in the country. Finally, I was taken by car to a building that I later learned was a prison run by the intelligence service of that country. The guards took my picture from the front and side before conducting an entry interview.

I was led to a cell at about 1.30am and when the guard opened the door, I could see one man on a bed and five more sleeping on the floor. I stepped into the cell, trying not to step on my new neighbours, and turned as the guard pulled shut the cell door. To my amazement, I felt sure I had seen that door before.

More than two years earlier I had dreamed that I was in prison. In that dream I clearly saw the door of my prison cell and heard the lock click into place. The door in my prison cell was the same door I had seen in my dream – it was

the same colour, it had the same window in the middle of it and it made the same clicking sound as it locked shut. I realized immediately that **my visit to the prison cell in that country was not a surprise to the all-knowing God I serve** and the dream He had sent me two years earlier was a comforting reminder of His sovereign control over whatever I might face.

The five prisoners on the floor squeezed a little closer together and pointed to a sliver of empty floor space. I lay down, without a blanket, trying to ignore all the questions racing through my mind - How long will I be here? What is my family thinking? What have they been told?

The next morning, I met my cell mates, who immediately asked about news from the outside world. As I began to tell them that the self-proclaimed extremist group the world knows as ISIS had recently killed 129 people in Paris, they jumped to their feet and began shouting for joy. Their joy at hearing this news shocked and frightened me so I decided not to share any further information with them.

My cell mates became increasingly demanding, especially during certain times of the day. Although I didn't have a Bible in those early days of my imprisonment, God was faithful to remind me of verses that I had read or studied in the past. It seemed like every couple of days He would remind me of particular passages of Scripture.

The hardest thing was being away from my family and not knowing whether they knew where I was or what happened to me. I quickly broke down in tears when I thought of them, so I worked hard not to think about them because I didn't want my cellmates to see me crying. 🙏

... to be continued

Petr Jasek is Global Ambassador of Voice of the Martyrs & Ambassador of International Christian Association. In the next issue of Stand!, find out how God delivers Petr from his prison cell.

SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE

Authors: *Helene Berhane with Emma Newrick*

Book Review Rating: **Highly Recommended** ★★★★★



Song of the Nightingale is the true story of Helen Berhane, held captive for over two years in appalling conditions in her native Eritrea. Her crime? Sharing her faith in Jesus, and refusing, even though horrendously tortured, to deny him. A sobering, painful, heart-rending account of true faith in the face of evil, this book makes for uncomfortable and yet inspirational reading. Helen says, "I want to give a message to those of you who are Christians and live in the free world : You must not take your freedom for granted ... If I could sing in prison, imagine what you can do for God's glory with your freedom." A real challenge for the church in the West. 🌍

"Helen's story grabs our attention and holds it firmly. This book is an unforgettable account of one individual's stand for her faith, which will encourage and inspire you."

Jeff Lucas, international leader, speaker & author

"Release International is to be commended for bringing Helen's moving story to our attention. It is people like Helen who inspire us to remain faithful & to work for the relief of God's people under persecution. I pray that her story will be an encouragement for many in getting involved & staying involved."

Dr Michael Nazir-Ali, former Bishop of Rochester

For those who are interested to purchase this book, you may send us an email at admin@gosheninternational.org.