

An Encouragement to Pray for the Persecuted Church

by K.P. Yohannan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and support for the persecuted church, encouraging listeners to respond to the suffering of others with compassion and action.

Duration: 25:02

Scripture: John 16:33, Acts 14:22, Philippians 1:29

Topics: "Persecuted Church"

Description

In this video, Dr. K.P. Yohannan, the founder and president of Gospel for Asia, shares stories of persecution faced by Christians in unreached mission fields. He recounts the tragic incidents of a missionary witnessing the poisoning of a young believer and the acid attack on a girl who refused to deny her faith. Dr. Yohannan emphasizes the suffering, starvation, and physical abuse experienced by thousands of believers in South Asia. He also reminds viewers of Jesus' words in Matthew 10, where he warned his followers about the persecution they would face for their faith.

Transcript

Hello and welcome. In just a moment, you'll hear a special message from Dr. K.P. Yohannan. He's the founder and president of Gospel for Asia, a Christian mission organization that has brought the good news of Christ to millions in South Asia over the last three decades, primarily through Gospel for Asia supported missionaries.

Jesus promised his followers that the world would hate and persecute them, and many Gospel for Asia supported missionaries have come to know the harsh reality of Jesus' words. Beatings, death threats, and imprisonments are a few of the things they encounter on a daily basis. Throughout the entire month of November, would you join us in praying for the persecuted church? Here's K.P. encouraging us to commit to pray and fast for persecuted believers all over the world.

I do thank God, and I'm deeply grateful for this very special time during this year. And every year, when we are reminded of the suffering church, and as you know, church, regardless of denomination or what name they go by, look like everywhere we are thinking about the suffering brothers and sisters during this very special day, the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. But, like a lot of other things, I sometimes wonder, do we really understand what this is all about? What do we mean by, or what do we

understand when we say persecuted church, or persecution? Obviously, the word persecution helps us to think about the word suffering.

But, how do you explain suffering in tangible terms? What do you mean by that? Well, again, if you take time to think, we immediately will say, well, K.P., suffering, it means physical suffering, or mental suffering. You know, lack of food, or misunderstanding and abuse, and being put down, and kicked out of schools, and your house got burned down, and possibly be martyred or killed for believing in Jesus. So, all these images and explanations, obviously, comes to our mind.

And for me, when I think about the persecution the people of God are going through, several things come to my mind. One is, it is reported that some 14,000 people are brutally murdered for their faith in Christ around the world. I mean, that's a lot of people, when you think about 365 days, you divide that, but 365 you will see, it is a non-stop thing.

But, keep in mind, this is only reported, and how much more suffering going on that we don't have any understanding about. For example, in my own life, not a week go by I don't get half a dozen emails and telephone calls of missionaries being beaten up and abused, their legs broken and thrown in prison, or all kind of stuff, their children get kicked out of schools, parents throwing out their children because they confess Christ as their Lord. And, you know, it's one thing, I'm sure you agree, it's one thing to hear these things, and know these things, it's an entirely different thing for us to think deeply and let that enter into our mind and our heart and make us respond to these kind of things based on our love for Christ and Christ's agony and His love for His body.

You know, I think about this sad story I heard about one of our missionaries in an unreached mission field, and he went there hoping to witness and plant a church, and he did lead couple of hundred people to the Lord, and worship center was established. And then, one day he was called desperately by some believers to visit one of the young person in the hospital, and the story is that this son was poisoned by his own family members. They tried to kill him, and he's crying, he refused to deny his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another story, family members pouring acid on the face of a young girl, because she refused to deny Christ. I personally know right now, at least half a dozen young people who never can go back home, they gave their life to Christ, they were given this option, either you deny Christ, and come back to your old faith, or you leave home. You see, I don't know if I need to keep on telling you about what's going on.

Obviously, you as a minister, a clergy, or a pastor, or a believer, living in this free nation, we are bombarded with huge amount of information about the suffering of the people of God. Oh, by the way, please don't forget, hundred years from now, you are going to be with these precious believers from Bhutan, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, Bangladesh, remote communities. You never heard their language, you never met them, you have no clue about their foods, and how they live, but one thing, they have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

They also experience the amazing wonder of being washed in the blood of the Lamb, and they are the sons and daughters, and we are going to be with them. How wonderful it would be, my brother, my sister, if in this life, we are going to be able to enter into the lives, especially the suffering, brothers and sisters, in many of these countries and cultures. But you may say, what do you want me to do? You see, what is our job? It is to seek the things of Christ.

I'm sure you agree, we are told in Colossians chapter 3, set your affections on things that are above, not on things that are here on earth. If that be the case, the value and meaning that drive us to make decisions for our daily lives and what we plan for the future, everything depends on something much more greater than the present tense and our own little lives. It must be things of eternal values.

And that is the first reason why we need to consider this. Jesus said, I was naked, you clothed me. I was in prison, you came to see me.

I was abandoned, forgotten, forsaken, you became my friend. That portion of scripture from Matthew 25, when you look at that, you know this is to come. And so, now we must live our life looking at the suffering church, the persecuted church, knowing that actually Christ is suffering.

And how much time we actually spend praying for them, how much time we spend to think and enter into their world, not because you hear this on road to reality or read some book or somebody come after you, but rather you are searching out to find out what is going on. You know, think about this. If your son or daughter, after finishing their high school or so, they went to another country to study or do business or whatever it is, and all of a sudden you don't hear from them for a few months.

I'm sure if you are a parent or grandparents like you know I am, you get really worried. And you do everything in the world to communicate with them. No telephone works, no email works, nothing works.

What do you do? You will go to the end of the world to find out every avenue possible to find out where your son is, where your daughter is. If nothing else works, you will go to the embassy and say, look, we need to find out. And then you hear that they got in an accident, they are in a hospital or they got in some unfortunate crisis, end up in jail or something like that.

What you will do? I tell you what you will do. What I will do, we will sell everything we have, if that's what it takes, walk or swim or take a bus or train or fly or whatever means to get there. Yeah, it takes thirty hours of air travel or journey through jungles for three, four days, but we will.

Why? Because it's our own flesh and blood. Don't you think so? The precious brothers and sisters in Peshawar, Pakistan, just a few weeks ago, Sunday morning a couple of thousand people came to worship the Lord and hear from God's word. A couple of people walked in with bombs strapped on themselves and exploding these bombs and killing eighty, eighty-five believers and hundreds and hundreds of precious, innocent, helpless people are wounded and suffering.

Think about the mental torture, the agony, the physical abuse and the destruction. Now the question is this. Please understand me.

I am not trying to produce guilt trip or condemnation that you curse yourself for living in America or Europe. No, I am not. I am trying to tell you, Christ, now sitting on the right hand of the Father, when He saw His body, Stephen, one of His sons, being stoned, abused, lonely and alone, you read in the book of Acts chapter 7, Christ is not sitting.

No, He is standing up. And Stephen was given the amazing privilege to see the glorious face of Christ. And you read the passage, kind of give you a glimpse of the heart of Christ, how He feels for the suffering body, just one individual like Stephen.

Now you take that further. Think about in the state of Orissa, just a few years ago, which I am sure you heard about. Some four thousand homes, simple huts maybe, simple dwelling places, but four thousand plus homes of these Christians, believers, were partially destroyed, completely destroyed, burned down, and never forget, meeting one of our missionaries, he and his wife said, they came and burned down our house, everything we had.

Finally, when we came back to see what happened, they had to run, flee for their life. They saw just partially burned one door frame standing up. Everything was completely demolished.

That was a story of thousands of homes. They are giving up everything they believed in, and gave up sin and living for darkness. They now follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

They became sons and daughters of the living God. And Satan hates it. And people that are instigated and driven by this hatred, attack and abuse and destroy.

Oh, by the way, thank God for thousands and maybe hundreds of thousands that prayed with us, and said, you know, we are praying, but also we want to do something to bring hope and help for these believers. And we were able to construct over a thousand homes completely and partially destroyed, being rebuilt, and thank God for the churches that we were able to rebuild. Again, that kind of helped me to say this to you.

Sometime, sometime, more than you realize, we ourselves are the answer to the prayer that we are praying, Oh God, be with the suffering believers in Pakistan. Oh Lord, be with those people that are abused and right now in prison. Please, Lord.

And then the Holy Spirit says, why don't you think about canceling your planned vacation and take the resources and help my children to find a place to live, to buy clothes that they lost, Bibles that were destroyed. Why didn't you help them to build that church in that village, in the community, for them to worship me? You see, you should not now interpret what I am telling you as a means to collect some money from you or some benefits. No, I am telling you, often our spirituality remains as information, but that is not spirituality.

We cannot divorce the physical part of our obedience, our willingness to die to self in order to enter into the suffering of Christ, especially on the behalf of the church, our brothers and sisters that are being persecuted around the world. You are listening to Dr. K.P. Yohannan. He is the founder and director of Gospel for Asia and he will be right back.

Throughout the month of November, we are encouraged to pray and fast for the persecuted church and we would like to offer you a calendar which will help in that endeavor all year long. It has a prayer emphasis and we are asking for a donation of \$5 which will benefit Gospel for Asia's persecution fund. To learn more about the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church and to order the calendar, visit roadtoreality.org. That's roadtoreality.org or call 866-WIN-ASIA.

Canadian residents, you can visit the following website, roadtoreality.ca or phone us at 888-946-2742. Thank you in advance for praying and now, with the rest of his message, here's K.P. I just think about this dear brother, one of our missionaries who spent 8 years in prison and then just a few months ago he got released. You know what his crime was? Led several hundred people to the Lord Jesus Christ and the people around him didn't like him and they created all kind of false charges against him such as he was a

terrorist and on and on and locked him up.

But the amazing thing, when one of our missionary leaders went to see him, many many times over the years, every time he would say with a smile, you know, I'm sad but I must tell you, my Lord Jesus knows that I'm here. He has a plan. And of course he's sad about his wife and kids living outside and now he's in prison.

But, you want to know what happened? When he was allowed, he was let out, he now leaves a significant number of people behind that he led to Christ and he was teaching and discipling. And in Nepal the same thing happened. After our brother Manja was in prison for 10 years for a crime he didn't commit except his only crime, leading people to Christ.

But when he comes out, other prisoners that he led to Christ and discipled, some of them are right now studying in Bible schools preparing themselves after they've been released so they can serve God. And that's what Paul said also. Remember in Philippians, you know, these believers are quite sad about Paul being in prison, abused and all that.

He says, oh, don't worry about it. I just want you to know one thing. All that happened to me helped for the furtherance of the Gospel.

And I ask you to consider a couple of more things during this very special time when we are committing ourselves for prayer and fasting on the behalf of the persecuted church. You know in the Gospel of John chapter 16 verse 33, Jesus said, in this world you shall have trouble or tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world. Acts 14.22, we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.

It is given to us on the behalf of Christ, Paul says in Philippians, not only to believe on Him, but also suffer for His sake. And I, you know, sit here and talk to you and you listen to me. I want you to know, right now, tens of thousands of our brothers and sisters are experiencing unbelievable amount of suffering, starvation, physical abuse, being rejected from their own villages and homes.

Children rejected by their own parents. But then, keep this in mind. You read the Gospel of Matthew chapter 10.

What did Jesus promise for those that want to follow Him? He said, I am sending you as sheep among wolves. I wish He said, I am sending you as wolves among sheep. That would be a better deal, but no.

You see, having lived 8 years on the mission field, early days of my life, and being beaten up and abused, and my clothes destroyed and burned, I have seen much of it. Today I live with the reality of sharing this pain and agony in many, many of these nations that we serve today. But I ask you, while these sufferings and abuse and killing are forced upon us by our own people, the believers, the Christians, the church in many of these nations, they recognize this is a privilege the Lord gave them to suffer for His sake, as Paul talked about it often.

Take time, would you? Read 2 Corinthians to find the normal Christian life. But here is a question I want to ask. Do you understand the meaning of bearing the cross of Christ? Do you understand the meaning of taking 2 or 3 or 4 days of fasting with the world map weeping on behalf of the suffering church and people that do not know the Lord and perishing? Are you waiting for someone to force suffering on you and burn down your house and take everything away from you and reject you and throw you out and kick you out of your school and college and you are nothing? Or are you willing to choose the inconveniences, the

difficulties, for the sake of Christ? You see, carrying the cross does mean following in Jesus' footsteps.

And in His footsteps are rejection, brokenheartedness, persecution, rejection of the Lord, rejection of His persecution, and even death. There are not two Christs, an easygoing one for easygoing Christians and a suffering one for exceptional believers. By the way, the statement was made by Hudson Taylor, who understood what it means to surrender everything to Christ by choosing to do so, then giving His life on the behalf of people that do not know His Master, but suffering also with the people of God by embracing the cross.

And I pray that as pastors, ministers and brothers and sisters that claim to know the Lord in free nations such as we are in, I pray that we will take these few days, especially this particular day, not as a day of celebration, but a day for fasting and tears and prayer, intense prayer on the behalf of the suffering church around the world. And if you go to our website, I am certain you can get a mountain of information about what is going on, so that you can pray. There is plenty of information that will be given to you in your church and magazines and radio broadcasts and in a thousand ways.

And may we remember the call of Christ to come after Him, denying ourself, forsaking whatever we need to forsake for the sake of our Lord and the church. And by the way, as I said earlier, a hundred years from now, what does it matter? May now we choose to say no to ourself and be the kind of people that will need to spend even the whole night or day or days in prayer, especially times like this, when you know what happened in Pakistan or in Orissa or what is happening in China or the Muslim countries. May the Lord break our hearts that break His heart and may He lead us with His burden that will go alone and as a community to pray and intercede.

May the Lord speak to us. Amen. Well, that's K.P. Yohannan, founder and director of Gospel for Asia, and he's been encouraging us to join churches all across the world in lifting up the persecuted through prayer.

Why not encourage your church to get involved in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church by going to our website. We've quite a number of free helpful resources from videos to church bulletin inserts and even some prayer ideas. It's all waiting for you at theroadtoreality.org. We're also excited to offer you a 2014 calendar that has a prayer emphasis.

We often need reminders to pray, don't we? And this calendar serves that purpose. It's just \$5 and that will go right into Gospel for Asia's persecution fund. Again, we're online at theroadtoreality.org or call.

Place your order at 866-WIN-ASIA. If you're in Canada, go to roadtoreality.ca or call 888-946-2742. Thank you for remembering to pray for the persecuted throughout the month of November.

This has been a presentation of Gospel for Asia.

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