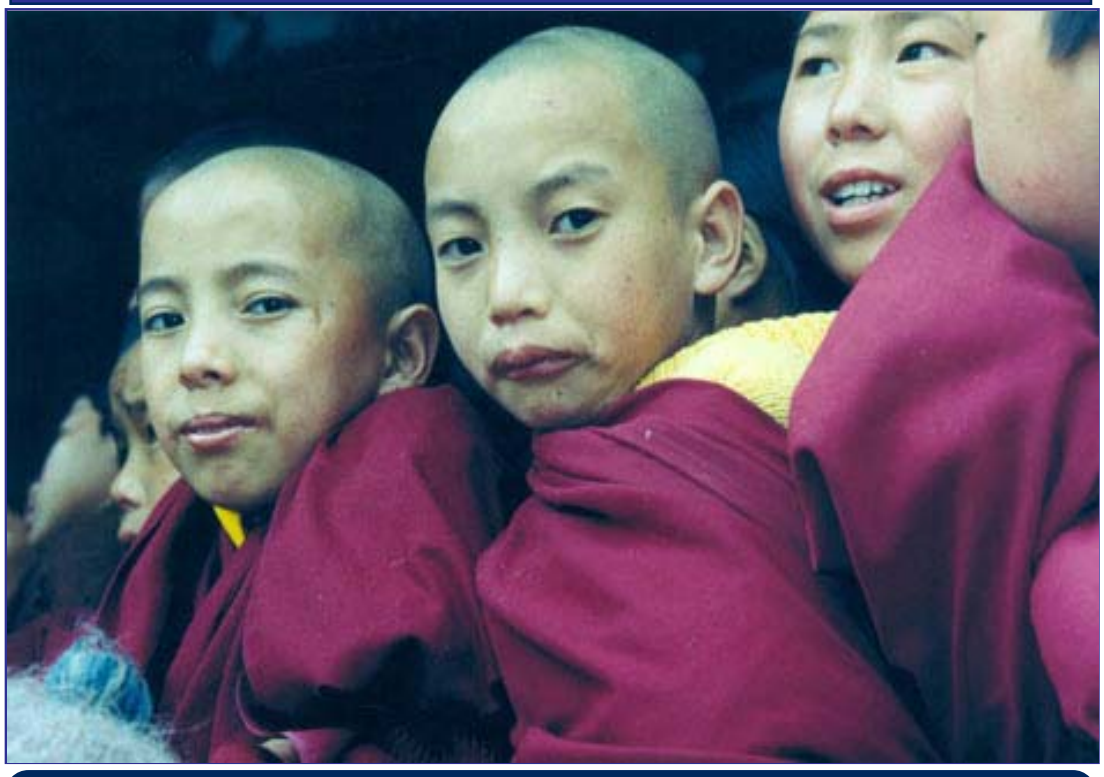
Asia Harvest

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Saved for His Glory

- A Testimony from the Himalayas -

A Biblical View of Persecution (Part 2)

by Glenn Penner

For several issues now we have focused on Christian martyrs in China. Many people have written to express their appreciation for these testimonies, but others have struggled to understand the reasons behind persecution. Many believers have been falsely taught that following Jesus only brings blessings and happiness. Glenn Penner of The Voice of the Martyrs has kindly written an essay 'A Biblical View of Persecution' which will appear in the front of Paul Hattaway's coming book, 'China's Christian Martyrs'. We hope you will read his words carefully and prayerfully, as they will help you gain a deeper understanding of why Christians are persecuted.

The demand of Jesus on His followers is to tread the path of martyrdom. He was about to send His disciples out as sheep among wolves and He had told them that they would likely die in the process of carrying out their ministry. In order to build His Church (Matthew 16:18), His death was necessary, as He points out in verse 21. This is the foundation. Without Christ's death there is no redeemed community. But just as Christ's cross was needed to establish His Church, our crosses are needed to build His Church. Both are needed. There is no better way to put it than to follow the lead of the Romanian church leader Josef Ton who coined the phrase: "Christ's cross was for propitiation. Our cross is for propagation." To be called to follow Christ was to receive a call to suffer (e.g. Acts 9:16; 14:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 Peter 2:21; 3:9, 17).

It was this understanding that sacrifice, suffering, and even death were the normal cost of discipleship that fueled the evangelistic efforts of the first century Church. They did not expect to experience all of the blessings of heaven in this world. They knew that by their faithfulness, even unto death, they were storing up rewards in heaven. Contrary to our belief that it is a blessing not to be persecuted, they knew that it was the persecuted who are blessed (Matthew 10-12). Rather than following our example of thanking God for the privilege of not suffering for Him, they thanked God for the honor of suffering for His sake (Acts 5:41). They knew that in order to bring life to others, they must die; to see others experience peace with God, they would

have to suffer the violence of the world; to bring the love of God to a dying world, they would have to face the hatred of those whom they were seeking to reach. It is in this context that they described spiritual warfare; not freedom over bad habits or psychological problems, but the brutal reality of witnessing to the faithfulness of God in the face of suffering, sacrifice and death. It was only in this context that the purposes of God would be accomplished.

This is also the reality of persecution today. We continue the task of taking the gospel to the end of the earth, knowing that He goes with us and that we do not suffer alone. In all of our afflictions, He is afflicted and just as Jesus demanded of Saul of Tarsus, so He asks of today's persecutors, "Why do you persecute Me?" The knowledge that nothing can separate us from Christ's love (Romans 8:35), that the Spirit prays for us when we can only groan in agony (Romans 8:26-27) and gives us His words in the face of our accusers (Matthew 10:19.20) provides the help that the disciples of Jesus require to remain faithful witnesses. God has provided all that is necessary for the disciple to stand firm. Yes, there may be fear, but by God's grace it need not control us. Yes, there may be terrible suffering, but suffering is not the worst thing that can happen to the child of God; disobedience to the Father is.

As you read the testimonies of these courageous brothers and sisters in the pages that follow, it is worthwhile to reflect on the words of Peter: "*For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God*" (1 Peter 2:19). In these words, Peter defines grace as suffering due to one's faithfulness to God. As we read the accounts of those who have suffered for the sake of Christ, we might be justified in saying that from the world's perspective, those who endure persecution are heroic, but from God's perspective they are recipients of grace. Peter stresses that enduring suffering is evidence that God is at work in one's life. There is no glory for the sufferer. No hero worship. No merit for those who are able to endure hardship, no boasting of one's achievements. It is evidence of God's grace. It is all a work of God, from beginning to end. When people can suffer horrible persecution and endure, it is evidence that God has been at work. Is it any wonder that near the end of this epistle, written especially to instruct persecuted believers to stand firm in their faith, the apostle writes, "*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast*" (1 Peter 5:10).

Cover picture: Young novice monks at a Buddhist temple in Arunachal Pradesh, India. Few people in this remote part of Asia have ever heard the Gospel.

Saved for His Glory -

A Testimony from the Himalayas

Earlier this year we had the privilege of traveling to Nagaland, in northeast India, where we helped train about 30 Asian missionaries preparing to take the Gospel to remote unreached tribes and people groups throughout the Himalayan region. These workers, and many others, are supported through our Asian Workers' Fund. We had a wonderful time of fellowship, and thanked God when the workers shared their testimonies. One of these that touched us deeply was that of a tiny man named Dolo Sono, whom God has used to plant more than 60 churches throughout the remote state of Arunachal Pradesh, which borders Tibet. This is his testimony:



"Praise the Lord!

My name is Dolo Sono. I grew up in an area where nobody had ever heard of Jesus Christ, not even once in our lives. My fathers worshipped the spirits for countless centuries, and they encouraged me to follow them and become a priest of the Donyi-Polo (Sun-moon) religion. We didn't know who the Creator was, so my tribe had no option but to worship His creation. We considered the sun and the moon our father and mother, giving sustenance and light to us.

My son developed a blood disease. He suffered terrible pain as his condition worsened over time. My wife and I could hardly stand to see the pain he was in. I called on the spirits to help, but he only grew worse. I visited other priests and asked them to pray for my son, but the more they prayed, the worse he became. Then, like a dagger through my heart, my precious son died.

I was grief-stricken, and wept uncontrollably as I stared at my little boy's lifeless body.

I didn't realize it at the time, but a Christian lived in a nearby village. When news spread that the Donyi-Polo priest's son had died, the Christian came to my house and asked if he could

pray for my son, who had been dead for four hours already. I didn't see any harm in letting the follower of Jesus pray for him. He started to pray, and a short time later my boy suddenly came back to life! He sat up and was fine.

We later found that he was also completely healed from the blood disease that had caused him so much suffering!

As you might imagine, when news of this great miracle circulated, everyone was amazed and rushed to our home to see my son for themselves.

I didn't know anything about Jesus, but from that moment I knew that He alone was the true God, and I decided I would serve Him for the rest of my life.

The first thing I did was search for other Christians. I thought they must be really special and powerful people, because they followed the true and all-powerful God who has the power to bring the dead back to life and change people's hearts on the inside. After searching far and wide, I was shocked to discover that there was just one church in my entire region, with only eleven people in it.

The eleven Christians were weak and persecuted. They met in a small, run-down building. I found this really sad. My own temple where I had served as a priest was beautifully decorated by comparison. I could scarcely believe that the followers of Jesus were so crushed and timid even though they possessed the Truth. My forefathers had followed



Dolo Sono

Satan for centuries without any light from God. Those who followed lies were much larger in number than those who followed the Truth. This was wrong, and I decided to do something about it. From that day onwards I determined to help God's Church grow.

From the day God raised my son from the dead, I started telling people about Jesus. This was the least I could do. I thought everyone would be excited to hear about Jesus, but I soon found that it made people angry. My own parents and family threatened to disown me if



Waiting to hear the Gospel... A hevaily-tattooed man from the Wancho tribe in Arunachal Pradesh.

I continued to follow Jesus. I told them I must follow Him, because He is real and he raised my son from the dead!

I started preaching everywhere I could, walking from village to village and encouraging people to abandon the false worship of our forefathers and to stop bowing down to the sun and moon. I didn't know anything about the Bible, but I boldly testified to what had happened, and that Jesus alone was true and powerful.

A short time later someone told me there were many Christians in Nagaland, a state south of Arunachal Pradesh. This news excited me, so I caught a bus there and met with many true believers in the Lord. Almost the whole of Nagaland was Christian, and I was greatly encouraged. I returned home with more Bible knowledge, and could better explain the gospel to people.

The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh have worshipped spirits and demons since the beginning of time. The only other religion that people respect is Buddhism, which came from Tibet many centuries ago. As I continued to preach about Jesus, I experienced many attacks and problems. People thought my conversion to Christianity had brought great disgrace on my ancestors, especially because I had been a priest.

I was beaten on many occasions, and attacked with swords and spears, but God preserved my life, and there were always a few people interested in listening to my message.

Jesus helped me so much in those early years. Once I visited some villages for the first time and found that God had prepared the people by giving them dreams in advance of my arrival. Because of this, the people were kind to me and listened to the Good News I had come to share.

I believed everything the Bible said. I read that Jesus told his disciples to only take one coat with them when they went

out to preach, so I only wore one shirt until it was filthy and covered with lice.

The years went by and I was so glad that many more people in my tribe and other tribes started to follow Jesus too. In many places I saw people healed by the Lord and delivered from demons. Hundreds of people believed in God. In each place where people decided to follow Jesus, we organized small house groups for them to meet together in.

A strange thing happened right at the time when God was moving so powerfully and saving many people. Other Christian leaders started to attack me and tried to stop me preaching. They said I was not qualified to preach, because I had never been to a seminary. I told them it was a shame I didn't fit into their mould, but that there was no way I could stop preaching because Jesus was in my heart and He must come out!

This only seemed to make these religious people angrier and they even travelled around different villages, telling lies about me and warning people not to listen to me. People in many places turned against me and refused to welcome me.

God encouraged me from the Bible, as I read how many of His children in other times had experienced similar opposition from those who claim to be His followers. Jesus was always attacked by the Pharisees, and I realized that there were many people like Pharisees operating in Arunachal Pradesh.

I wept many times because of the lies being spread and the great opposition. I became depressed. Then one night I had a dream where I heard a voice saying, "Dolo Sono, I have called you to preach. Get up and preach!"

I replied, "But no churches want me any more. The religious people have told the unbelievers not to listen to me. What is the point?"

I then heard the Lord say, "God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble."



A woman from the Nocte tribe in Arunachal Pradesh. The Nocte are one of about 60 tribes in this little-known part of Asia.

After this dream I knew that I could no longer bow to the threats and intimidation. I read in the Bible that if God is with me, who can be against me? I obeyed the Lord and started preaching again, and God helped me and opened many doors and opportunities. In many villages, people who had worshipped the sun and moon were saved and Jesus entered their hearts.

For years now I have been travelling all over Arunachal Pradesh. People know me as the former Donyi-Polo priest who found the true Way. By the power and grace of the Living God we now have more than 60 fellowships, and more people are meeting Jesus all the time.

Please pray for our state, and the 60 tribes who live in it. Please pray that everyone in Arunachal Pradesh would soon love Jesus.

Thank you and God bless you!"

Dolo Sono and his family continue to preach the Gospel and establish churches throughout Arunachal Pradesh. They receive financial support through our Asian Workers' Fund.

Last year our coworkers in Arunachal Pradesh saw 468 people come to Christ, and established 26 churches. If you would like to help with the Asian Worker's fund, please send in the yellow "Response form" in this newsletter. Alternatively, you can easily and safely make a donation to this or any of our projects over our website.



Naga Christians perform traditional dances and songs of thanksgiving to God for the harvest, when we visited Nagaland, northeast India, earlier this year.