

July 2008 Prayer

To my praying co-workers:

I am including three sections in the prayer material today...one has request material from the United Nations.....another has request material regarding Christians in Iraq and the third I am building around an article.

I guess because it is July, and one of the American July highlights is the celebration of our freedom on July Fourth, as the word freedom keeps echoing in my heart. I am sure that each one of us gives thanks to God for the freedoms we enjoy here in the United States...for which many have made great sacrifices in years past and will need to continue doing so. Freedom is actually a Biblical word...and it became threatened and extinct in many ways because of the sin of mankind. When we are born, each of our souls are already enslaved and our hearts and minds are affected by this personally, in our families, and in our world.

One of the articles I wrote a few months ago I entitled: Global Disaster. I am sending a copy of this article as part of this month's mailing. As you read it, would you make notes regarding the freedoms that mankind lost because of sin...and as we pray for our world at large, may we pray for God's powerful intervention that there may be a great harvest throughout the nations of our world...that men and women and boys and girls will be moved by His loving kindness and tender mercies...that He will be recognized and drawn near...in every facet of human life...pray for Kings and Queens, for political leaders, for government officials, for leaders in countries around our world where people are held in the grip of an official's heart filled with greed and avarice. One of the enslavements in the human race because of sin is selfishness...and people in high places have great opportunity to live it out, to the suffering of their peoples.

We can work our way through the lists of nations, praying especially for those we know are in hard and difficult places, like Myanmar and the countries of the Middle East and not far from us...countries whose people have no freedom as human beings and do not know the freedom found in Christ Jesus.

Let us pray Psalm 22:27-28: ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH WILL REMEMBER AND TURN TO THE LORD, AND ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE NATIONS WILL BOW DOWN BEFORE HIM, FOR DOMINION BELONGS TO THE LORD AND HE RULES OVER THE NATIONS.

Thanks,
Lois

Date: Jul 2, 2008 5:21 PM

As you well know, politics is a fickle game. In ministering to heads of nations, the challenge is less in gaining the first meeting than in gaining subsequent meetings. We make a lifetime commitment to each person to whom we begin to minister, as long as they will receive it. It is in subsequent ministry that we can help them go deeper with Jesus Christ. This includes coming to faith in Jesus Christ, and then walking in dependence upon Him in the governing of their nation. During the past year and a half, two of the heads of nation that we have been able to go deeper with have been put out of office, which has been painful for us. The testimony of one of these with regard to our ministry in his life, you may previously have read on the government website: <http://www.fiji.gov.fj/cgi-bin/cms/exec/view.cgi/63/3999>

A third President, whom we have poured into intensively during the past six years suffered a stroke on Sunday while in Egypt for the African Union Summit. We suspect it had something to do with the fact that he has been the strongest voice in Africa regarding the injustices of President Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Apparently, the stress of the stand he had taken raised his blood pressure to the point where he experienced a brain hemorrhage that required surgery in Egypt before he was transported to Paris in a near comatose state. He had a minor stroke two years ago. It seems that it will take a miracle for him to be able to resume the duties of his office. We are asking God for that miracle. During the six years we have ministered to him, he has come to faith in Jesus Christ, been publicly baptized, and is now actively part of a solid Bible-believing church. In addition to ministering to him in an ongoing way, we minister to his pastor at least monthly to help him and the leadership of his church to guide the President in walking with Jesus while leading the nation. Would you join us in praying that God will supernaturally restore this President who desires to be God's man in the leadership of his nation?

GLOBAL DISASTER

The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Gen. 2:7

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden, but the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" Gen. 3:8-9

The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain. Gen. 6:5-6

The greatest global disaster took place in the Garden of Eden. It was global because our Creator is God of the whole world; He is the Global God. (Read Ps. 104) And the earth and its peoples were created for His glory. When man fell in sin, the results were catastrophic, tragic, and world shattering. Because God had placed man as His partner in the care of His creation, man's departure from His Creator affected everything and does to this day. Just look around and consider our world and its peoples.

What were the results in man himself? He hid from the Creator for the first time, and all generations after him still attempt to hide from God. His human spirit once filled with a sense of well being and peace because it was connected to God, became instead a place of isolation, fear, human longing, guilt, enmity and desire to do his own personal will rather than that of His Creator. Adam went his own way (Is. 53:6). And because we humans are not wise enough, intelligent enough, capable enough to live apart from God doing our own thing, going our own way, each succeeding generation has become more crippled with confused reasoning and darkness.

And where did pain begin? The first mention of pain was in God Himself. (Gen. 6:6) From that time on, pain describes humanity. God even said to Eve that in pain she would bear children; Labor pains in childbirth are only the beginnings of pain connected with children, as we watch them find their way in such a world as ours, and our hearts often ache with their lost paths and seeming determination to self-destruct. Also we are in pain as we see them as recipients of this world's problems and sorrows.

Recently dear friends of mine lost an adult child through suicide; what pain is in their hearts and the hearts of others. But it occurred to me that God's created children have committed suicide since the fall of mankind, as we hide and withdraw from the One who loves us the most, and as we self-inflict those things that destroy our minds, bodies and spirits in searching continually for escape hatches from life, rather than turning to the One who can help us.

Our planet has suffered greatly from the disaster in the garden. Many people have no conscious propriety about the planet God arranged as our living quarters, giving us everything needed for mankind to use. Instead it is treated with disdain and in destructive way, the realm of nature, with the balance God set up for our good the animal kingdom He created and placed here with His plan of sharing and living together, giving us dominion over it, is suffering because of our selfish and thoughtless indifference. Dominion carries with it the responsibility and respect necessary for preservation. The animal kingdom God created has also been affected by the global disaster in the garden.

Because God loved His created beings, He gave mankind His identity, He created man in His own image, and the abilities of man are the identifying marks that we were created by an awesome God.

When God asked Adam, "Where are you?", it was not because God could not find Adam, but rather that Adam would begin to realize for himself what his choice to disobey God had brought into life's experience. "Where are you?", No longer eager for God's Presence,

no longer unafraid, no longer with peace and contentment, but rather grasping for the temporary, unsatisfied and longing. But God was there, after all, this was His garden and His creation, His people. And God is still here and not silent.

To every generation since that day, God says, "Come back to Me," as He set His plan in motion for a new Creation, a creation of mankind who would turn to Him for reconciliation and restoration, who would not only individually experience newness of life and the work of God in personal affairs, but also become part of God's new Kingdom, with a King in authority, yes. Jesus Christ is King. How can this be? Through God's judgment of sin, and His plan of atonement brought about by the Cross upon which Jesus died. And for us today, it is Jesus who says to us, "Come unto Me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11:28)

The Christian in a right relationship with God will excel in planet propriety. He works with God to be the keeper of God's Creation. He will be concerned about global issues involving planet disasters, he will be concerned with proper care of God's animal kingdom and in practical ways will ask his Father what he can do to help those problems in our world, and he will become a burden-bearer for people experiencing the pain that is global from the sinful circumstances of betrayals and prejudices and heart enmities, from rejections and the broken promises of those who abandon, God is creating a new world with people who will join Him by receiving the only possible One who can save us from ourselves, Jesus Christ.

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever. (Rev. 22: 3-5). (L.E.Summer, 2007)

Vicar: Dire Times For Iraq's Christians

June 29, 2008

(CBS) This segment was originally broadcast on Dec. 2, 2007 It was updated on June 26, 2008.

From the time of Jesus, there have been Christians in what is now Iraq. The Christian community took root there after the Apostle Thomas headed east in the year 35.

But now, after nearly 2,000 years, Iraqi Christians are being hunted, murdered and forced to flee -- persecuted on a biblical scale in Iraq's religious civil war. You'd have to be mad to hold a Christian service in Iraq today, but if you must, then the vicar of Baghdad is your man. He's the Reverend Canon Andrew White, an Anglican chaplain who suffers

from multiple sclerosis and from a fanatical determination to save the last Iraqi Christians from the purge.

White invited *60 Minutes* cameras and correspondent Scott Pelley to an underground Baghdad church service for what's left of his congregation. White's parishioners are risking their lives to celebrate their faith.

"The room is full of children, it's full of women, but I don't see the men. Where are they?" Pelley remarked.

"They are mainly killed. Some are kidnapped. Some are killed. In the last six months things have got particularly bad for the Christians. Here in this church, all of my leadership were originally taken and killed," White explained. "All dead. But we never got their bodies back. This is one of the problems. I regularly do funerals here but it's not easy to get the bodies."

Many Iraqi Christians' churches are destroyed or abandoned. The congregation is smuggled in and out of this secret sanctuary. Even letting *60 Minutes* come to the service was a terrible risk. White is among the last Christian ministers here, a savior with crosses to bear. Larger than life, stricken with MS, and by his own reckoning, driven a little bit mad.

He was first sent to Baghdad by the Archbishop of Canterbury nine years ago, well before the Christian persecution.

"You were here during Saddam's reign. And now after. Which was better? Which was worse?" Pelley asked.

"The situation now is clearly worse" than under Saddam, White replied.

"There's no comparison between Iraq now and then," he told Pelley. "Things are the most difficult they have ever been for Christians. Probably ever in history. They've never known it like now."

"Wait a minute, Christians have been here for 2,000 years," Pelley remarked.

"Yes," White said.

"And it's now the worst it has ever been," Pelley replied.

To understand the history of Iraqi Christianity, start with the Last Supper. One saint to the right of Jesus is the Apostle Thomas, who took the gospel and headed east after the death of Christ.

In modern times, under Saddam, Christians were treated much the same as Muslims; Saddam's right hand man, Tariq Aziz, was Christian.

Before the war, it's estimated there were about a million Christians in Iraq. They were a small minority, but free to worship, free to build churches, and free to speak the ancient language of Jesus, Aramaic. But, after the invasion, Muslim militants launched a war on each other and the cross.

On Sunday, Aug. 1, 2004, five churches were bombed. The Iraqi Christian community, which had survived invasions by Mongols and Turks, was driven out under American occupation. No one can be sure, but White estimates most of Iraq's Christians have fled or been killed. Those still here are too old, too ill or too poor to run.

"Why are you feeding them all?" Pelley asked.

"Because, this is the only decent meal they'll have in the week," White explained. "They can't afford food. So we're just moving from every other week to every week because they've got nothing."

Nothing for many, not even their families. The *60 Minutes* team was confronted with one of many stories of depravity as the congregation left.

"Outside the church service this gentleman put these pictures in my hand. I can't show you the pictures. They're just too much. They're pictures of his children. His daughter who was 15 years old. And his son who was about four years old. They've both been shot in the head," Pelley said.

His children were killed, the father said, because he ran a liquor store. Liquor stores are typically Christian businesses here, legal, except under the Islamic street justice that rules since the invasion.

"So I hear stories of shootings, death, torturing, kidnapping, mutilation. I hear it all," White told Pelley.

The people with those stories once lived in a neighborhood called Dora, where Christians, Sunnis, and Shiites had lived together. *60 Minutes* wanted to see what happened there so, we took a ride with U.S. Army Colonel Rick Gibbs. His men picked Pelley and the team up under a rusting relic of Saddam's tyranny, a parade archway made of two enormous swords, and from there they headed to ethnic cleansing's "ground zero."

"We have 13 churches. None of them are operational," Col. Gibbs said.

Asked if this was the worst neighborhood in town, Gibbs said, "It's the toughest neighborhood in town."

Gibbs commands the 4th Brigade, 1st Infantry Division out of Fort Riley, Kan. In Dora, he set up a combat outpost in an abandoned Catholic seminary.

“I was at a secret church service yesterday. A man came up to me and handed me some photographs of his children. They’d been shot to death. Somebody had come by their house and murdered his children because they were Christians. What are you seeing?” Pelley asked Gibbs.

“I don’t see a lot of that anymore. But when we first arrived we saw lots of that. We have 500 a month. That’s what we were tracking,” the colonel replied. “It would not surprise my soldiers to walk down a street on a patrol and see three or four bodies laying in the street with a bullet behind their head.”

U.S. forces do not protect the churches. There’s a hands-off policy for all religious sites and Gibbs says there’s another reason.

“The Christians do not want us to guard the churches openly,” he said.

Why wouldn’t the Christians want Gibbs and his soldiers to protect the churches?

“They feel that if we are overtly protecting the churches that someone underground covertly will come in and murder the Christians because they’re collaborating with the U.S. forces,” Gibbs explained.

There seems to be less violence now in part because of the surge of U.S. forces but also because the purge of Christians from Dora is largely complete. Gibbs says Islamic militants are on the run now.

“We hear that through our intelligence sources on the ground people telling us they’re running that’s how we knew to come down here with our next big fight to keep getting after them,” Gibbs said, as shots could be heard in the background. “And that’s what you hear over there is us in that fight trying to go get them.”

60 Minutes wanted to see one church that had been destroyed but Gibbs couldn’t take us there -- roadside bombs blocked the way. So he walked us over to a church next to his combat outpost. Because of the proximity, it hadn’t been looted. In fact, it hadn’t been touched by anyone for a very long time.

“This is one of the abandoned churches of Dora,” Pelley remarked inside the church. “It looks like it was left suddenly and completely. There’s a fine coat of dust over everything in the church. It was all left just as it was. One of the reasons these churches have been abandoned is in this letter, a letter that went out to the neighborhoods of Dora about a year ago. It reads like this: ‘To the Christian, we would like to inform you of the decision of the legal court of the Secret Islamic Army to notify you that this is the last and final threat. If you do not leave your home, your blood will be spilled.’ And in case there was any chance that anyone would not get the message, the letter ends like this: ‘You and your family will be killed.’”

Pelley talked to a young man, a Baghdad Christian, whose name we cannot use. He told

Pelley that after the invasion, posters appeared near his home.

“They were like telling us that Christians were against Islam, that we’re infidels, that women shouldn’t drive and a woman that doesn’t wear a scarf would get her head cut off,” the man told Pelley. “And I thought, ‘What, are we going back to the Middle Ages?’”

He told us his family began going to Mass in shifts. Asked why, he told Pelley, “If like the church gets bombed on like one of the Masses, so like half of the family will be there and half will be safe.”

Ultimately, the church was bombed.

Asked what has become of the people he used to worship with in that church, the young man told Pelley, “I simply don’t know. A lot them are in Syria. I don’t know any of ‘em that stayed in Baghdad.”

His family, unharmed, fled to neighboring Jordan. But most Christians ran north to Syria where they’ve filled a Damascus neighborhood. Knock on any door and you’ll find a story.

“They threatened this young girl,” one woman told *60 Minutes*. “They want her to become a Muslim. The boy is in danger of being kidnapped. My other boy is in danger of being kidnapped because we’re Christians.”

Another woman was on a bus outside Baghdad, when gunmen boarded and demanded to know her husband’s faith. “They told him, ‘How come you have not embraced Islam yet?’ He said, ‘To each his own religion,’” she recalled.

“He told him ‘I am a Christian.’ He told him to get off the bus,” a child added.

And they never saw him again. Christian refugees are now swept up in an exodus of historic proportions. The U.N. estimates more than four and a half million Iraqis of all faiths are running from the war. The United States has promised to help, but so far about 2,000 Iraqis have been allowed into the U.S., less than one tenth of one percent of all the refugees.

Those who remain in Iraq are bound together by a particular kind of faith known only to those under siege. Why is this happening?

“It’s happening because religion has gone wrong,” White told Pelley. “And when religion goes wrong, it kills others.” “The Muslim religion has gone wrong, is that what you’re saying?” Pelley asks.

“It has. And in the past, Christianity has gone wrong,” White says. “And what I say to people very clearly is that the history of Christianity is no better than the history of

Islam.”

“Some of your parishioners must ask you, ‘Why is God allowing this to happen to us?’” Pelley asked.

“To them I say, ‘God is with you and he is with me and I am with you and I’m not going away,’” White replied.

Since *60 Minutes* first reported this story, the purge has continued. In February, gunman ambushed, kidnapped and eventually murdered Iraqi Archbishop Paul Faraj Rahho. Canon Andrew White is still ministering to what’s left of his congregation.

Produced By Shawn Ft ran and Philip finer

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