

The New Testament Church
Compassion #1: Fellow Prisoners
 Pastor Paul Jehle - November 6, 2022
 Hebrews 13:1-3

I Introduction – International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (more notes on the back)

- A. Open Doors – March 7, 2022 - *Open Doors USA figures that 360 million Christians last year lived in countries where persecution was “significant.” Roughly 5,600 Christians were murdered, more than 6,000 were detained or imprisoned, and another 4,000 plus were kidnapped. In addition, more than 5,000 churches and other religious facilities were destroyed.*
- B. *American Christians talk of persecution, but that is what real persecution looks like... Afghanistan took over the top spot from North Korea this year. Open Doors explains that it long was ‘impossible to live openly as a Christian in Afghanistan.... Unfortunately, the August collapse of the U.S. – backed Kabul government made the situation immeasurably worse. Christian persecution is extreme in all spheres of public and private life. The risk of discovery has only increased, since the Taliban controls every aspect of government – including paperwork from international troops that may help identify Christians.*
- C. I was discipled in college by a local Pastor, who began with *Sit, Walk, Stand* by Watchman Nee
 1. It articulated the simple positional truth of who I was in Christ – *seated in heavenly places with all blessing* (Eph. 1:3; *raised with Christ; seated in heavenly places* (Eph. 2:6)
 2. I learned that I must “reckon” what is true in my spirit to my soul and behavior (Ro. 6:11)

II Hebrews 13:1-3

- A. *Let brotherly love continue... - Ask God to deepen our love for each other as a church*
- B. *Do not forget to entertain strangers... some have unwittingly entertained angels.*
 1. Hospitality is a powerful way to deepen the covenant of the church
 2. Strangers are simply people you do not know well
 3. It is possible that those who are truly strangers are actually angels
- C. *Remember the prisoners as if chained with them – those who are mistreated – since you yourselves are in the body also*
 1. **Remember** – *call to mind, recall, mention* – “continually remind oneself”
 2. **Prisoners** – *one bound, a prisoner, captive* – “bound against their will”
 3. **As if we are chained with them** – *to bind with* – a “fellow prisoner”
 4. Those mistreated – *to treat evilly, hurt, torment* - in jail unjustly
 5. Our hearts are yoked with theirs – see 1st Cor. 12:25-27 – *the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.*
- D. How do we embrace those in prison “as if we were in chains with them?”
 1. 1st John 2:2 and 4:10 – propitiation – “atonement” of Christ – to pay the price
 - a. Expiation – “reparation for guilt or wrongdoing” – to take our place
 - b. Hebrews 4:15 – *for we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize (have compassion on) with our weaknesses (feebleness, frailty), but was in all points tempted (test, entice) as we are, yet without sin.*
 2. We are to remind ourselves – we are crowned with compassion (Ps. 103:4)
 - a. Compassion flows out of our hearts when we rehearse how God has joined us
 - b. Beginning in the spirit, we can identify with them as if with them
 - c. Since Christ had compassion on us – taking our place – we can have compassion on others - seeking Biblical justice (relieve it) for those who suffer wrongfully

World Magazine, in August 2021, reported...

The Afghan church is a unique community, mostly aged 40 and younger. They are all Muslim converts. It's one of the fastest growing churches in the world. Since they are a tiny church, now doubled in size, they are considered very fast-growing. There are perhaps only 2,000 people. But they are an important force in Afghanistan, simply because of the force that the Gospel is. Because of the love of Jesus, the reach they have is a real thing in a dark, Taliban-shadowed country.

The Taliban then showed up to this Christian's house the day before the full city takeover. They have also visited other Christian homes. You might argue these are small, isolated incidents, but they play against the backdrop of nearby atrocities: Afghan military who have been hauled out of their homes and shot, and in one case beheaded. Afghan Christians are totally vulnerable with no political power.

30 AD - Jesus said, in Matthew 5:11-12 - *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

36 AD - Acts 7:60 – chronicles the martyrdom of Stephen. With the future Apostle Paul watching, Stephen cried out *"Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep."*

62 AD – 1st Peter 4:12-17 - *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

68 AD? – Revelation 6:9-11 - *When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

197 AD – Tertullian – who grew up in Carthage, had witnessed martyrs in Rome, and was converted, writing in his *Apologeticus*

They think the Christians the cause of every public disaster, of every affliction with which the people are visited. If the Tiber rises as high as the city walls, if the Nile does not send its waters up over the fields, if the heavens give no rain, if there is an earthquake, if there is a famine or pestilence, straightway the cry is "Away with the Christians to the lion!"

We are not a new philosophy but a divine revelation. That's why you can't just exterminate us; the more you kill the more we are. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. You praise those who endured pain and death – so long as they aren't Christians! Your cruelties merely prove our innocence of the crimes you charge against us...