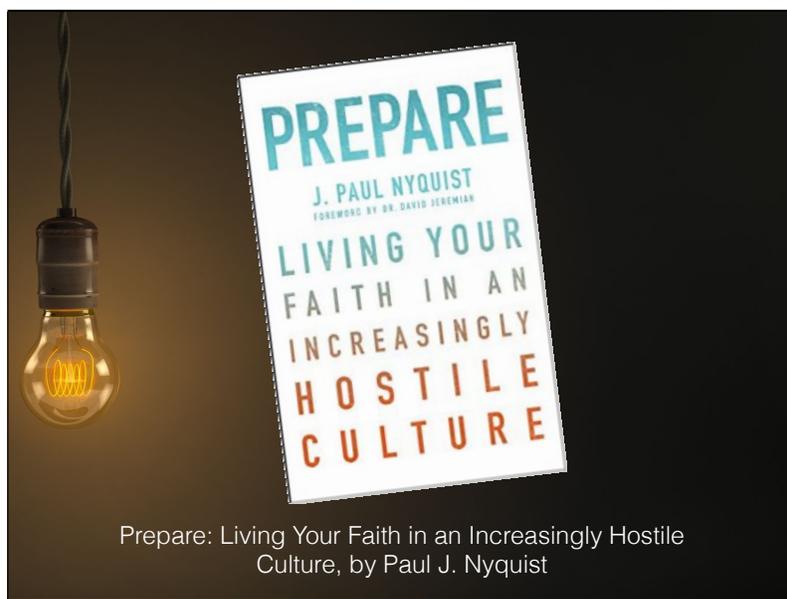


Clarity in Conflict: Cultural Opposition to Christian Values

We are in the time of a cataclysmic shift in the cultural war for the hearts and minds of Americans. Some are saying ... we lost the war. And now we learn the new reality of what it means to be a Christian in pagan America.



PREPARE:

He compares our present juncture with the moment Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon River to wage battle with Pompey for control of the Roman empire.

He said, “In our American culture war we have crossed the Rubicon. The die has been cast, the tipping point reached. Barring a gracious visitation from God, this nation is not going back to the culture and values it held in the past. The war is over, and the immediate future for believers will involve learning how to live righteously in this new environment— not pining for the good old days.”

Nyquist, J. Paul (2015-01-30). Prepare: Living Your Faith in an Increasingly Hostile Culture (p. 38). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.



In praying for the direction of this conference, the world was shocked with the graphic video of the martyrdom of 21 Egyptian Christian on the shores of the Mediterranean Ocean.

Sami Yacoub ... the regional director for Focus on the Family's Middle East outreach. Here is what Sami shared with our team:

- These young Christians were in their early to mid-20s. They went to Libya in search of work to help feed their families living under the poverty line in Egypt.
- In the days and weeks leading up to their deaths, their ISIS captors tortured them and attempted to persuade them to deny Jesus in return for living.
- They all refused to deny Christ.
- They all died on that beach singing songs to Jesus.

<http://jimdaily.focusonthefamily.com/what-the-media-isnt-reporting-on-isis-beheading-of-21-christian-men/>

They were identified as “The People of the Cross, the followers of the hostile Egyptian Church”

- Milad Makeen Zaky
- Abanub Ayad Atiya
- Maged Solaiman Shehata
- Yusuf Shukry Yunan
- Kirillos Shokry Fawzy
- Bishoy Astafanus Kamel
- Somaily Astafanus Kamel
- Malak Ibrahim Sinweet
- Tawadros Yusuf Tawadros
- Girgis Milad Sinweet
- Mina Fayez Aziz
- Hany Abdelmesih Salib
- Bishoy Adel Khalaf
- Samuel Alham Wilson
- Worker from Awr village
- Ezat Bishri Naseef
- Loqa Nagaty
- Gaber Munir Adly
- Esam Badir Samir
- Malak Farag Abram
- Sameh Salah Faru

from a handful of poverty-stricken villages in Egypt, where Christian communities face harassment, threats, and difficulty finding jobs to provide for growing families.

—40-year-old Majid Suayman Shihata: The oldest of the Coptic Christians beheaded by Islamic State terrorists had traveled to Libya to earn money to provide for his elderly mother and three children,

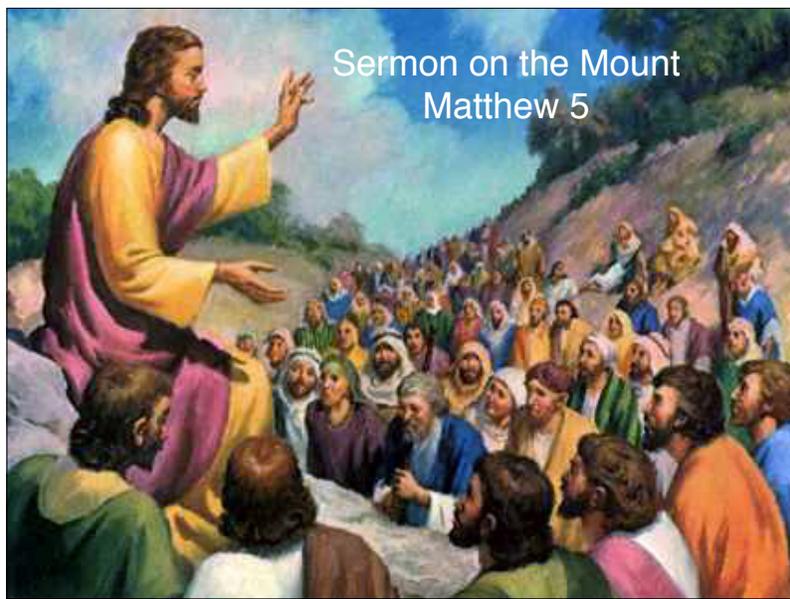
—24-year-old Luqa Najati, a newlywed working in Libya to build a life for his family in Egypt. Najati didn't know his wife was pregnant when he left to search for work. He never met his infant daughter.

—Two brothers—Bishoy and Samuel Stephanos—were saving for their weddings.

— Samuel Wilson was working to buy a home for his wife and three children.

—Twenty-six-year-old Samih Salah Shawqi left behind a wife and baby daughter.

But family ties meant nothing to the black-clad Islamic State militants wielding knives at the necks of their victims in a video released Sunday. The terrorists killed the men because they were Christians, with a caption on the gruesome execution footage declaring: "The people of the cross, followers of the hostile Egyptian church."



Let's hear more about the "Blessed Life" — prosperity — and success

Notice the tenor of the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5

— Sermon on the Mount — Blessed are the poor in spirit, mourn, and meek; those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers

...

NOT exactly subjects you hear from most television evangelists!

Matthew 5:10-12



- Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.
- Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

NKJ Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

— It's the irony of being blessed by persecution that is so difficult for us (Americans) to understand. We have enjoyed many decades of a Christian majority and the "blessing" of cultural acceptance.

Violence, Persecution Spread in Eastern Ukraine

Pro-Russian forces condemned for ongoing aggression. Orthodox Church criticized.

Timothy C. Morgan

[posted 5/06/2015]



separatists still dominate
Commission on Internat
religious freedom in Crim



kidnapped four
seen tortured, in a

ro-Russian
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concerns about

Last week, top Christian leaders, mostly Ukrainian, gathered in London and signed a resolution, condemning the ongoing violence and aggression and remembering the four men who were murdered.

- Protestants and Catholics experience “violent persecution” at the hands of pro-Russian separatists.
- Any religious group not associated with the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church “suffers disproportionately.” ...
- Pro-Russian groups have seized church buildings and educational facilities of Baptists and Pentecostals, using them for military barracks or other purposes.

The resolution welcomes these efforts from the church worldwide and affirms the goal of peace, resolution and reconciliation. The church is the entity that enjoys the highest level of credibility and trust within Ukraine and is key to the process of reconciliation,” the resolution says. “The international Christian community and NGOs can also offer significant support towards efforts to achieve national and interfaith reconciliation.”

Christianity Today:

Last June, pro-Russian separatists raided a Pentecostal church service in eastern Ukraine and kidnapped four Christian leaders. Some 35 days later, authorities discovered the bodies of the four, who had been tortured, in a mass grave.

- Protestants and Catholics experience “violent persecution” at the hands of pro-Russian separatists.
- Any religious group not associated with the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church “suffers disproportionately.” This would include Ukrainian Orthodox churches, Kiev patriarchate.
- Pro-Russian groups have seized church buildings and educational facilities of Baptists and Pentecostals, using them for military barracks or other purposes.

This article is located at: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/may/violence-persecution-spread-in-eastern-ukraine.html>

After Removing 400 Crosses, China Proposes Where Churches Can Put

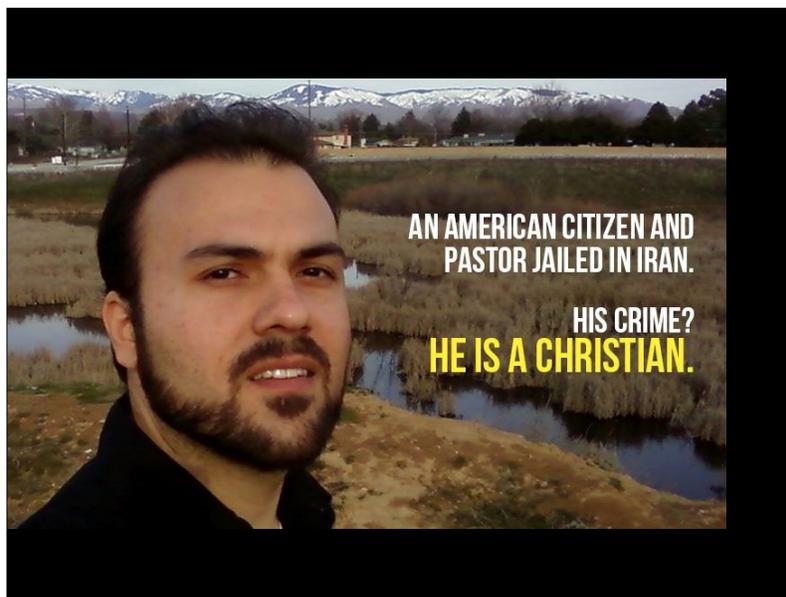


christianitytoday.com

Days after at least a dozen crosses were forcibly removed from churches, China formally protested a United States report on its lack of religious freedom. Now a proposal has surfaced to ban crosses entirely from the rooftops of churches in Zhejiang, one of China's most Christian provinces. ...

A draft of rules on religious structures released by government agencies this week says the crosses should be wholly affixed to a building facade and be no more than one-tenth of the facade's height. The symbol also must fit with the facade and the surroundings, the proposal says. The draft does not provide the rationale for the proposal.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/may/after-removing-400-crosses-china-proposes-zhejiang-wenzhou.html>



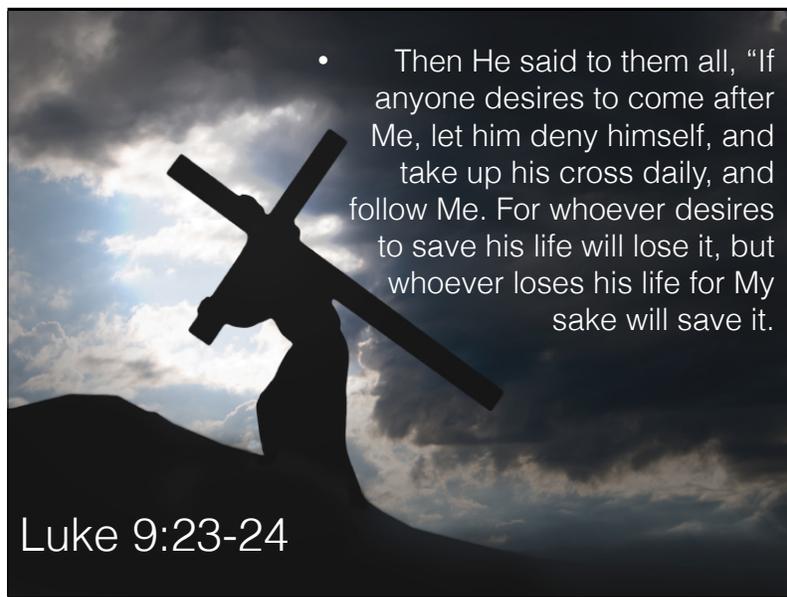
May 4, 2015

Pastor Saeed Abedini, a U.S. citizen who has spent over two and-a-half years in an Iranian prison for his Christian faith, is marking on Thursday his 35th birthday by urging believers to pray for America's revival.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/pastor-saeed-abedini-marks-35th-birthday-in-iranian-jail-says-he-is-crying-out-to-god-for-americas-revival-138621/#QCrZqEV3LR4rlsZQ.99>

—Abedini is a former Muslim who converted to Christianity in 2000. ...He has been detained in Iran since the summer of 2012 and initially incarcerated in Evin Prison in September 2012. On January 27, 2013, he was sentenced to eight years in prison, reportedly on charges of undermining national security through private religious gatherings in Christian homes in Iran in the early 2000s.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saeed_Abedini



- Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

Luke 9:23-24

If you choose to follow Jesus ... There is no promise all will be peace, joy and love ... there is every indication you may suffer persecution... We've talked a lot about abundant living ... but not so much about victorious dying...

Luke 9:22 ...“The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”

23 Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

WE ARE PEOPLE OF THE CROSS

Hebrews 11:33-38



- There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them....”

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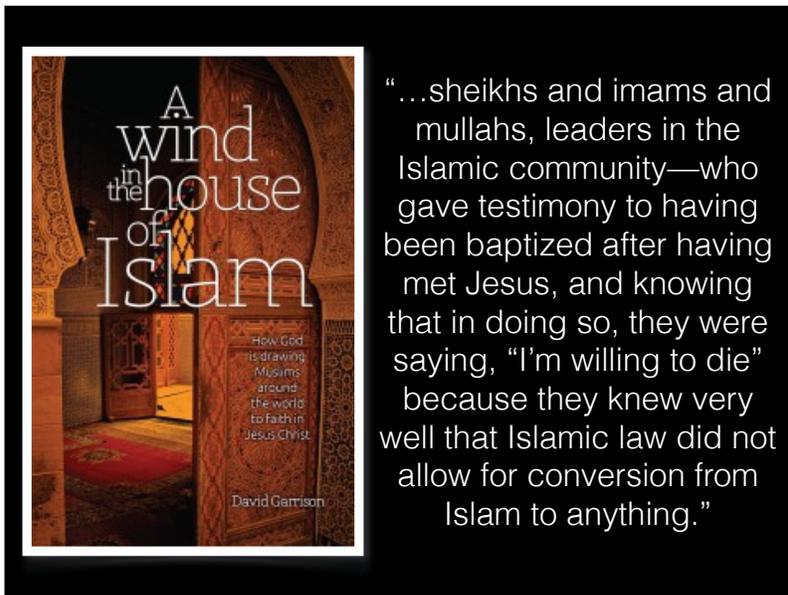


“The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.” Tertullian 3rd century (160 – c. 225 AD)
Christian author and theologian

[ADV] Then, Let this statement be true:

“May the blood of the martyrs be the seed of the revived church!” (from the video)

Persecution has never destroyed the church ... It has always been as fuel on the fire of revival.
We are about to witness one of the greatest waves of revival this world has ever seen.



“...sheikhs and imams and mullahs, leaders in the Islamic community—who gave testimony to having been baptized after having met Jesus, and knowing that in doing so, they were saying, “I’m willing to die” because they knew very well that Islamic law did not allow for conversion from Islam to anything.”

Revival is coming to the muslim world ... at great cost and sacrifice.

David Garrison, in his book, “A Wind in the House of Islam.”

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[http://www.worldmag.com/2014/07/the_rising_tide_of_muslim_converters_to_christianity/page2]

["The rising tide of Muslim converts to Christianity" By WARREN COLE SMITH]



John 1:9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Matthew 5:13-16



- “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.
- “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. „Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. „In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

NKJ Matthew 5: (quoted earlier 12 ...for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.)
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