

*“For you, God, tested us;  
you refined us like silver.”*

Psalm 66:10 (NIV)

# INTRODUCTION

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## **THE GLARE**

Years ago, before my name was so associated with fighting persecution, I visited Pakistan. I had already traveled to many, many countries, but dreaded going to Pakistan because of the depth and spread of Islamic fundamentalism. It's one of the worst places to live out life as a Christian.

The Islamic radicals are everywhere; some you could recognize by their beards and dress, while others were businessmen in suits, but they are everywhere.

The Christians there have to be very careful about what they say and do because one wrong move could provoke a response or attack that could cost you a beating, your home, or your life.

In the most fundamental countries like Pakistan, Christian girls are abducted, raped, and then forced to marry their rapists, while the perpetrators are almost never punished. Pastors loved for being passionate and on fire are murdered after being warned, "Shut up or else." Many other Christians are languishing in prison for years after being charged with blasphemy. After experiencing years of this kind of treatment, most of us would learn to take a few scraps, keep our mouths shut, and try to hold on to the little we have.

My host was a brother named Shahbaz, who had worked on behalf of persecuted Christians for years and who later in his career would be elevated to be the country's highest representative on behalf of religious minorities. My organization had worked with him for years, so it was wonderful to be with him on his home turf.

This was early in my career as I was trying to understand the Islamic mindset of hating Christians and was looking for victims to help. We

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met with numerous persecuted Christians, including Mrs. Mukhtar (see chapter 8, “The Soul Cannot Be Killed”). During our travels around the country, we were driving through Islamabad when we pulled up to a stoplight.

I was in the midst of jetlag and was dreamily thinking about the plight of Christians in Pakistan and how vulnerable they are and how vulnerable I was. My window was open and I thought, “If somebody wanted to get at me, it would be easy enough.”

As my eyes wandered from car to car, my mind awakened to what my eyes were taking in. A face contorted with rage was staring back at me. Dressed in the clothes and trappings of a radical, the face was looking back at me from a van 10 feet ahead. He leaned out of the van and was making quite an effort to look back at me and grab my attention. There was no mistaking his emotion or intent. I knew unmistakably what he was saying with his eyes: “You are a stranger here and not welcome; you are in danger if you stay and I would kill you right now if I had the chance.”

Our eyes met for only an instant and I turned away immediately and looked out the other side of the car, pretending to be oblivious. Shahbaz spotted the same man shortly after and started to whisper to me to get a look at him.

Within seconds, the traffic light turned and we turned to the right as the van went straight ahead. The hate-filled eyes kept looking back. Shahbaz relaxed after he saw that they wouldn't follow and the incident was over. When we later sat down to eat and talk about security issues, he said. “It's not safe for you to come here. It's fine this time, but security is notified of every time an American comes here. You never know if you are being watched.”

I have traveled all over the world, but being in Pakistan was one of the few times I have felt vulnerable; like a woman must feel walking at night alone in a strange place. You are not in control and there are people out there who would like to take you and do what they wish with you.

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That's what Christians in Pakistan and so many other persecuted Christian groups feel like all the time. It's not episodic, but rather a day-to-day reality. They often end up cowed, beaten down, and live life as second-class citizens.

Until recently, Christians in Pakistan were referred to, even in the press, by a word that is literally translated as "garbage collector." In some restaurants, Christians cannot eat with Muslims. In other restaurants, they have to use separate silverware.

It's laughable, I know, but think what that would do to your psyche over time. You might laugh at first and then get angry, but over time it would sink in and you would start to think of yourself as a "garbage collector" and keep your head down and try not to be abused.

### SHAHBAZ

Shahbaz, living in the midst of this extreme environment, always told me that one day he would be killed by Islamic extremists. As our relationship grew and I visited him in Pakistan, I saw that those statements weren't meant to garner sympathy or political support; they were a simple declaration of an obvious outcome.

As the government representative of Christians in Pakistan who stood up for persecuted Christians, against the radicals and their allies in the government, he had a target on his back.

I met with him in Washington D.C. just a few months before his death and took pictures with him. His beaming face in those pictures reminds me that the martyr often knows his end is coming, but chooses to walk in courage and spend his last days serving King and Kingdom with courage and selflessness.

As it came closer to his time, he began to distance himself from others, knowing that his end would be violent. Just a few months later, I read how he had been gunned down on the street outside his house.

### **AN UNWINNABLE WAR**

As the president of an organization that serves the victims of religious persecution around the world, my work deals with the violent underbelly of the world.

Islamic terrorists, Marxist governments, and social crusaders are continually oppressing, torturing, and killing those we call brother and sister, like Shahbaz, as they attempt to preserve or improve the “purity” of their culture, faith, or land.

I would dearly love to see the end of religiously motivated hatred and murder, but unfortunately, this is not a war that can be won. Jesus promised that those who hold dear the name of Jesus would be hated and persecuted in this world. He said, “If they hated me, they will hate you.”

The details and stories of victims like Shahbaz continually pass before me, as if on a stock ticker display. Over and over, I have been visited by the ultimate victims of persecution. Each one has leaned forward and whispered a message to me, but as if in a crowded and noisy restaurant, I could never make it out. I would shout over the din and ask them to repeat it, but they were gone and the unintelligible whisper was all that was left.

### **LIFE AND THE CHURCH ADRIFT**

As someone who has traveled a lot, I am continually moving in and out of our culture and comparing it with others. I’m often struck how modern life in the West has become unmoored for most.

We are cut off from loved ones by our busyness, our mobility, our devices, our wealth, and our culture. We are cut off from the past in that we are without the traditions that typically give cultures order, boundaries, and a sense of continuity to life.

We are cut off from God by our secular culture, and cut off from hope as the media continually portrays the future as apocalyptic and dark. Western culture is adrift and without paddle, rudder, or wind, in a sea of meaninglessness. The Church in the West, which also swims

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in this sea, is affected by living in the midst of it and is also adrift.

While our culture is quickly turning anti-Christian, there is no heavy persecution, and so we live our Christian lives without real cost. Understandably, but tragically, this produces a weak and flaccid Church.

### **THE FREE VS. THE PERSECUTED CHURCH**

Not only do we live out our lives without real cost to our faith, but we are asleep as to the plight of those who do. It amazes me how most Western Christians just don't know what is happening to their brothers and sisters in Pakistan or throughout the persecuted world.

They also don't know how safe they are, how rich they are, and how easy their lives are. In the free Church, preachers and laypeople often speak of receiving blessings and enlarging our tents. "Words of knowledge" are spoken that are unerringly positive and speak of more blessing.

They are gentle cooings in the ears of a soft and drowsy Western Church and don't reflect the experience of most of the world's Christians. All of this wearies me. I'm weary of our (and my own) lazy Christianity and I long for the fire of personal revival for the Western Church.

### **WOUNDS AND SCARS**

Witness Lee (a protégé of the great Watchman Nee), the great Chinese pastor of the early twentieth century, spoke to this point eloquently.

*"The biggest problem today is that it is hard to find any wounds or scars in most Christians. Most of us do not have any wounds, scars, marks of death, or experiences of the cross."* -The Crucified Christ, Chapter 1, Witness Lee

While we may not have any wounds or scars, the persecuted have them in abundance, and for the last 15 years I've heard their stories on a daily basis. It has been a supreme privilege to work with them and learn from them.

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The Lord has used them in my life, mind, and soul, to continually act as witnesses who have been called to testify regarding what our Christian life should or could be.

### **THE WHISPER**

For many years, I felt like they were trying to communicate with me. It's as if I could see their faces and see their lips moving, but couldn't hear them as they were only whispering.

I knew their message was of great importance, but the message was always fleeting, given to me as they were rushing out the door to a heavenly appointment. Now, 15 years into ministering to them, I feel like the unintelligible has been heard and I long to share with you what has been whispered to me.

I sincerely feel that this secret, whispered from those with “wounds and scars” is the great secret to life. Their words last spoken will point you to the way home and just may transform your life and take you to the place God has been leading you to all along.

So allow me to introduce you to those who have paid the ultimate price for their faith and I hope that you too will discern their whisper as they leave their mark on you and lead you to the deep.

Jeff King  
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“HE WILL **RESCUE**  
THEM FROM  
OPPRESSION AND  
VIOLENCE,  
FOR **PRECIOUS** IS  
THEIR BLOOD IN HIS  
SIGHT.”

PSALM 72:14 (NIV)