

BARNABAS FUND - AID AGENCY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH - BRINGING HOPE TO SUFFERING CHRISTIANS

INDIA

Barnabas task force responds to devastating new wave of Covid

PAKISTAN

Education and opportunity for Christian brick-kiln families

LEBANON

Rebuilding hope amid rubble of blast-shattered Beirut

bringing relief in the land of fear



The Barnabas Fund Distinctive

What helps make Barnabas Fund distinctive from other Christian organisations that deal with persecution?



We work by:

- Directing our aid only to Christians, although its benefits may not be exclusive to them ("As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, **especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**" Galatians 6:10, emphasis added)
- Channelling money **from** Christians **through** Christians **to** Christians (we do not send people, we only send money)
- Channelling money through existing structures in the countries where funds are sent (e.g. local churches or Christian organisations)
- Using the money to fund projects which have been developed by local Christians in their own communities, countries or regions
- Considering any request, however small
- Acting as equal partners with the persecuted Church, whose leaders often help shape our overall direction
- Acting on behalf of the persecuted Church, to be their voice - making their needs known to Christians around the world and the injustice of their persecution known to governments and international bodies

We seek to:

- meet both practical and spiritual needs
- encourage, strengthen and enable the existing local Church and Christian

communities - so they can maintain their presence and witness rather than setting up our own structures or sending out missionaries

- tackle persecution at its root by making known the aspects of other religions and ideologies that result in injustice and oppression of Christians and others
- inform and enable Christians in the West to respond to the growing challenge of other religions and ideologies to Church, society and mission in their own countries
- facilitate global intercession for the persecuted Church by providing comprehensive prayer material
- safeguard and protect our volunteers, staff, partners and beneficiaries
- keep our overheads low

We believe:

- we are called to address both religious and secular ideologies that deny full religious liberty to Christian minorities - while continuing to show God's love to all people
- in the clear Biblical teaching that Christians should treat all people of all faiths with love and compassion, even those who seek to persecute them
- in the power of prayer to change people's lives and situations, either through grace to endure or through deliverance from suffering

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

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Front Cover: Mozambican Christian woman receiving food aid from Barnabas Fund



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Vision, Understanding, Courage and Action

Job observed that “Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). Jabez prayed that he would be free from pain (1 Chronicles 4:10) but the story of our first parents, Adam and Eve, was that pain entered into the world through their rebellion and now shapes our very existence.

Covid-19 has had a devastating effect on many parts of the world, none more so than India. Its effects on the Indian Church have been horrendous. As I write this over 350 Christian leaders are known to have died, and probably the real figure is far, far higher. No one has been spared – bishops, pastors, evangelists and other church leaders have succumbed, as well as their flocks. Many ministries that have lost their leaders are on the verge of collapse.

In the nightmare of Covid-19, disease is followed by economic devastation and destitution. Analysts have coined the acronym VUCA to describe our present situation, which is characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

Living with VUCA creates anxiety and destroys hope. But we cannot give way to despair. The Church cannot be in retreat. We cannot flee the battlefield. Every crisis presents an opportunity that we must seize. For God is in control and His purposes for His people and for this world will be fulfilled.

A Christian VUCA is therefore necessary.

Vision. In a time of suffering, war and pestilence, Habakkuk is told to “write the vision” (Habakkuk 2:2 AV). We cannot live without vision, for vision takes us into another realm: the realm of the Divine. It gives us the purpose of our existence: to fulfil the Divine will. It shows us what God wants and our place in it. “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18 AV). We need to look beyond the physical and temporal to the supernatural and eternal.

Understanding. We need to understand the times. Habakkuk kept questioning the Lord, but long ago the men of Issachar had understanding of the times (1 Chronicles 12:32). Never has this gift been more urgently needed. Yes, we need science to give us rational explanations of what is happening but also we desperately need prophets, the men and women of God who will make plain the vision, set it in our context, enabling us to understand what is happening and our part in it.

Courage. We need courage not to retreat, not to sink under heavy burdens, not to see only opposition and obstacles in our path. Habakkuk was surrounded by catastrophe but feared only the LORD (Habakkuk 3:2) We need courage to go forward when all seems hopeless, to go forward with compassion and a heart of love to bring comfort to the afflicted. Paul wrote of the constraining love of Christ which compels us on (2 Corinthians 5:14AV).

Action. All this must lead to action. Habakkuk continued undaunted with his God-given task (Habakkuk 2:1). Action requires resolve. It means taking the initiative, breaking out of our apathy, deciding what is to be done and doing it. It means seeking God’s will and guidance and then acting according to His calling.

God calls us to a life of faith. We live the life He has called us to and we keep trusting Him. “The righteous shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4 ESV). Such faith enables us to rejoice in the LORD, even though “the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the sheepfold and no cattle in the stalls” (Habakkuk 3:17-18). We know that ultimately the Lord will be victorious and “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”.

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO
International Director

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how barnabas is helping

Gifts to children remind Christian refugees of God's enduring love

"I thank God that He never forgets us. He hears our prayers, sees our needs and lavishes us with His generosity." These are words of a Christian mother living as a refugee in Turkey, after her daughter Raya (5) received a pair of winter boots as a gift from Operation Christmas Joy, supported by Barnabas.

Raya was among 750 children given an essential item of warm clothing that their parents, most of whom fled Christian persecution in Iran or Afghanistan, could not afford. The gift also included warm accessories (hat, scarf, gloves), a game, a colouring book and pencils as well as a healthy snack.

Many children received their presents while participating in a Christmas service of celebration conducted via Zoom. Our church partner said the project reminds Christian families that they are not forgotten by God and has "lasting emotional, psychological as well as spiritual effect" upon them.



Delighted children receive gifts from Barnabas-sponsored Operation Christmas Joy

£20,000 (\$27,975; €23,250)

Project reference 54-1367

Refuge provides safety and support to persecuted converts in Uganda

When Ugandan "Silas" converted from Islam to Christianity he was threatened, his home was destroyed and he had to run for his life. Another convert, "Thomas", was rejected by his family and almost died in a hammer attack that left him partially paralysed. Both men were helped by a Barnabas-supported Christian refuge for Muslim-background believers (MBBs) and their children, run by Pastor Umar Mulinde, who himself suffered an acid attack when he converted from Islam.

Uganda is more than 80% Christian yet Muslims occupy key roles in society and few Muslims are prosecuted for attacks on converts. MBBs are sacked from Muslim-owned businesses, children of converts are thrown out of Muslim-controlled schools and women converts are forcibly divorced from their Muslim husbands.

Pastor Umar's refuge gives discipleship training and trauma counselling to converts and provides vocational training in skills such as baking, sewing and farming, to enable them to earn a living. It also enables children to go to school.



Ugandan Christian converts and their children find security at the refuge

£10,000 (\$13,920; €11,560) to help support 60 MBBs and 50 children a year

Project reference: 56-1091

Food and water is an answer to prayers as famine grips Madagascar

"God does not abandon His servants because he has been preparing other people to rescue us ... when we were starving," said a Christian woman after she received food and water from Barnabas. She lives in the far south of Madagascar, where the rains had failed for two years and many have died because of the resulting famine.

People were so hungry that they had resorted to eating ashes flavoured with tamarind, just to put something in their stomachs. Covid was rife and there was almost no water.

Barnabas has provided rice, beans, cooking oil, water, soap, candles and other basics to at least 1,200 families in most urgent need. "It is because of our prayers that God has provided for us," said a Christian man.

Thank the Lord, the rain has now fallen and we are providing maize and bean seeds for 2,600 Christian families to enable them to grow crops again.



Hungry Christian families wait to receive food and water provided by Barnabas

£75,000 (\$106,000; €86,850) for food, water and hygiene items
£14,606 (\$20,280; €16,800) for seeds to plant

Project references: PR1552 00-634 (Disaster Relief Fund)

Compassion in action

Strengthened and encouraged. This is what we often hear from Christians who have received support from Barnabas Fund. Thank you for making this possible. Here are just a few examples of the many ways we have recently helped persecuted and pressurised Christians.



Training for new missionaries enables Church to grow in remote regions of Nepal

Pressure on Christians is growing in Hindu-majority Nepal at the same time as the Church is expanding rapidly. Barnabas is helping to fuel Church growth by funding training courses to equip missionaries to start new fellowships in remote regions of the country.

The training enriches the missionaries' Biblical understanding, provides guidance in ministry and leadership skills and gives the missionaries the knowledge to stand firm in the face of harassment and hostility. Refresher courses provide additional support for missionaries already serving in isolated communities.

"Noah" recently came to Christ and attended a Barnabas-supported training course before returning to his village in the Far Western mountains, one of the remotest places in Nepal. The small fellowship he started in a hut has grown to about 20, and six of his congregation are soon to be baptised. "Praise the Lord," he said. "I would not have been of use to the Lord without the opportunity of that training."



"Noah" brings the Word of God to his growing congregation

£3,500 (\$4,840; €4,040)

Project reference: PR1511

Food and clean water provided for Indonesian quake survivors

A powerful 6.2 magnitude earthquake hit the Indonesian island of Sulawesi in January, killing at least 90 people in the western coastal region. Hundreds of homes and some church buildings were damaged or destroyed, and thousands were left homeless, many of them Christians. The government response was inadequate and survivors sheltering in some makeshift camps received no help for days after the quake.

Thanks to your support, Barnabas was able to respond quickly to the urgent needs of displaced Christians. We provided food parcels, including rice, cooking oil, condensed milk and tinned fish, to thousands of Christian families.

The survivors were also in desperate need of clean water because the quake cut supplies, especially in the hilly parts of the badly affected Mamuju regency, which is about 16% Christian. Barnabas restored clean water to thousands of Christian families by drilling wells at churches and at a Bible college.



One of the Barnabas-supported wells drilled to provide clean water to survivors

£52,820 (\$72,495, €60,975)

Project reference: 00-634
(Disaster Relief Fund)

New businesses and jobs provided for converts from Islam in Kyrgyzstan

Jobs have been created and new businesses funded for Christian converts from Islam in Kyrgyzstan, thanks to a café set up several years ago by Muslim-background believers at a bus terminal. Barnabas helped with unexpected extra costs when the café recently lost its premises at the terminal, following redevelopment of the site, and had to rebuild.

Some officials demanded a bribe to facilitate the move but the Christians refused to pay, which led to criminal charges against the officials. Since lockdown eased, business has been good and the staff of six has grown to 19, some working part time. The café's pay-to-use toilets boost income by 30,000 soms (£255; \$355; €295) a month, twice the average Kyrgyzstan salary.

The café's profits have enabled four converts to set up four more small businesses, including sewing and leather products. The provision of jobs is important in a country where Muslim-background believers often struggle to find employment because of hostility from the majority population.



The café has provided vital jobs for Muslim-background believers in Kyrgyzstan

£10,650 (\$14,840; €12,330)

Project reference 26-1114
(Small business start-ups in Kyrgyzstan)



A prayer for Covid-19 times

O Lord and Father of humankind,
 Look upon Your children
 With mercy and compassion
 In this time of great suffering.
 For a deadly pestilence stalks
 our world
 Leaving a tsunami of grief in its wake.
 Loved ones are lost in death.
 Families and friends mourn alone.
 Many lie in hospital,
 Hospitals that cannot cope,
 Whose anguished staff are in despair,
 While weeping families of the sick
 Beg in vain for help.
 Many live in fear,
 Fear of falling sick,
 Hoping against hope
 That the virus will not strike.
 Many are facing destitution,
 Jobs gone, savings used,
 At their wits' end,
 Every hour in distress,
 Because they cannot provide for
 their families.
 There is none to help.
 Lord, have mercy on those You
 have made.

O Lord and Father of Your Church,
 Your beloved,
 For whom Your Son died,
 Your blood-bought ones,
 His Body,
 Look upon them in Your tender mercy
 And bless Your people.
 For they too suffer
 With all humanity
 And none have escaped these horrors.
 Give them Your grace to bear
 Their manifold afflictions.
 Give them Your protection
 That they may know Your deliverance.
 Give them sufficiency in all things
 That they may not be in want.
 Give them the sense of Your presence
 That they will know You are with them.
 At all times and in all their sufferings
 Give them Your Divine love
 That they may love and serve You
 In all faithfulness.

O Lord and Father of our Lord
 Jesus Christ,
 That great Shepherd of His sheep,
 Who has borne Himself our sicknesses
 and sins,

Our Healer and Redeemer,
 A Man of Sorrows and acquainted
 with grief,
 Look upon His Body broken on earth.
 Weep with them as He did at
 Lazarus' grave.
 Keep them close to Your heart
 For their names are engraved
 On the palms of Your hands.
 Enter into their pain
 And bring them relief,
 Enter into their sadness
 And bring them comfort,
 Enter into their despair
 And bring them hope.
 Turn their dusk into dawn,
 Their night into day.
 Remove the terrors of Satan's curse
 With Your mighty right hand.
 If it be Your will
 Deliver them from death
 That they may live,
 Or if it be Your will to take
 them Home,
 Grant to them a peaceful end
 As they entrust their spirit into
 Your hands.

To You, our Triune God, be the glory,
 Creator and Sustainer of all.
 To You be the praise,
 Mighty and majestic Lord.
 Before You we bow,
 Accepting Your Divine will,
 Your sovereign purposes,
 In submission and with joy.
 We proclaim You
 Our Lord and King,
 Our Saviour and Master,
 Our Guide and Comforter,
 And declare with all the Church,
 "Your will be done,
 In heaven and on earth,
 Now and forever."
 And we look to that glorious Day,
 The time of the healing of the nations,
 When all creation will praise You,
 Sorrow will be banished,
 Suffering will cease,
 And death will be vanquished
 To the glory of God the Father,
 God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

AMEN

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7 practical gifts of love, comfort and hope you can give

to show God's love to your suffering family in troubled and uncertain times

In the New Testament we are reminded by Paul that we "fulfil the law of Christ" by bearing each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2). The persecuted Church is growing and the faith of its members is strong but they desperately need our gifts of love, hope and comfort to survive, recover and thrive in an increasingly challenging world. In troubled and uncertain times, whether Covid is still raging or it is a post-Covid context, our suffering family face new struggles and hardships on top of the burdens that they already bear.

Through Barnabas you can help with these 7 priority areas:



1 feed and nourish hungry Christians



2 care for vulnerable Christian communities by providing vital access to healthcare



3 encourage and provide spiritual sustenance to persecuted Christians



4 give the next generation the opportunity to **learn** and equip them for a hopeful future



5 help the Church **lead** by creating the much needed Church leaders of tomorrow



6 sustain marginalised Christian communities



7 protect Christians struggling to survive natural disasters, conflict and anti-Christian violence, especially helping the most vulnerable of all – including children, elderly, widows and orphans and converts – with critical aid.



"My heart cries when I see my young children working alongside me," says Samina, a Pakistani Christian widow who works in a brick-kiln. Her husband died of a heart attack and her daughter also died. "The monthly food package is a big blessing for us," says Samina. "May God bless you. Amen!"



Impoverished Christian families receive vital supplies of food

Barnabas helping Christians during India's Covid crisis

India has been overwhelmed by a second wave of Covid-19. A new variant tore through the country this year, resulting at its peak in more than 4,000 deaths per day, as well as leading to new lockdown restrictions. Hospitals and other medical services struggled to respond to the pandemic – low supplies of oxygen along with the lack of beds meant that many died without receiving treatment that may have saved their lives.

“This second wave has been really harsh,” said Samuel, a church leader in India, adding that Christians – many from poor, Dalit backgrounds – have been particularly hard hit by the ongoing situation. Hundreds of pastors and church leaders have died. The “sheer numbers” of church leaders to succumb to the virus represent “an irretrievable loss”, he said.

The restrictions on activities and the further lockdowns needed to control the virus had consequences of their own. Many Christians in wage-earning jobs were unable to continue their work – effectively, said Samuel, “they didn’t have a job.” This, along with the closure of church services, means that the income of church leaders taken from tithes and offerings also dried up.

Barnabas emergency task force across denominations

Barnabas Fund took the initiative in providing much-needed support to suffering Christians, creating an emergency task force of church leaders from across denominations to identify and respond to needs. Thanks to the generous donations of our supporters, Barnabas provided food in May and June to 25,000 needy Christian families.

For poor families Barnabas provided food parcels, each costing around £11 (€13; \$15). These usually contained rice, wheat, flour, lentils and cooking oil. Pastor Kdaika, the leader of a church in Parigada, Odisha State, described the food parcel as “a miracle ... because we do not have money, we did not know how we would meet our needs. But thank God that He heard our prayer and through the Barnabas Fund we were supported.”

Barnabas medical task force created

God willing, our next phase of support will provide vital medical supplies and equipment to church hospitals which were under severe pressure as well as mobile medical centres to ease that pressure by providing more ways to treat the sick. We have created a separate task force, bringing together the main Christian medical institutions in India.



Pastor Kdaika and his family are among 25,000 families provided with food parcels from Barnabas to help them survive India's Covid crisis

Barnabas Fund also worked with church leaders to provide reliable information for Christians as to how they should respond to the pandemic. This included details about how to reduce the spread of the virus, advice about hand-washing and general hygiene, and guidance as to what action to take if somebody develops symptoms. It also included combating misinformation and misunderstandings about both vaccines and the virus itself.

While the immediate need was for medical supplies, food and information, as well as comforting the bereaved, in the long term Barnabas Fund will be on hand to help the hundreds of churches who have lost pastors and leaders. In the months and years ahead the development of new spiritual leadership will become a vital need for India's Christians.

Please continue to pray for an end to the pandemic, for those who are suffering financially due to lockdown restrictions, for those who are sick or bereaved, and for God to raise up a new generation of Christian leaders who will take as their mission the spiritual care of His people.

Project reference: PR1530 (Covid-19 emergency fund)

Setting free and building up

further support for Pakistan's brick-kiln labourers



Anosh and his precious school text books. He had to drop out of school and join his father working at the brick kiln. Now, he is able to attend a new school where he can get the education he needs and grow in his Christian faith

“My

God has given me this opportunity to learn about my Christian religion. This was not happening in the government school where I studied before.” These are the words of Anosh, a young Christian from one of Pakistan's

numerous brick-kiln families, who thanks to the generosity of Barnabas Fund supporters now has the opportunity to attend school and get the education he needs.

Anosh had to stop attending school when his father, a brick-kiln worker, could no longer afford the fees. Anosh found himself instead working alongside his father, destined it seemed to a life of brick-kiln labour. Now, however, he studies hard to fulfil his dream of becoming a doctor so that he can support his family and help his community.

Brick-kiln workers are low paid and families live at survival level. If someone falls sick, or another family crisis occurs, they have to take a loan from the brick-kiln owner. Interest on the loan is then deducted from their weekly wages and this can go on for years, even generations. As long as the debt remains, they are bonded to the brick kiln, unable to leave and get another job. It's almost like slavery.

Debt cancellation brings great joy to impoverished Christian families, yet, with support from Barnabas Fund, our project partners have been able to do so much more than simply setting free families by repaying their loans. Anosh's story is one example of the wider spiritual and material blessings which we can bring to our brothers and sisters in the brick kilns of Pakistan.

Financial training and spiritual support

Our project partners also provide training and guidance for families who are now free of debt. Families whose loans have been repaid are often still impoverished, and need support in managing their income to try and avoid being trapped in debt once again. Our project partners hold classes which teach skills such as budgeting and household management.

In some cases families who have been rescued from debt are able to donate a portion of their income for a “revolving loan fund” which is used to repay the debts of other bonded Christian labourers. So far 89 families have had their debts relieved by fellow Pakistani brick-kiln believers, recently freed from their own debts. Having been desperately poor, helpless and dependent for so long, the freed families are thrilled to be in a position to help other believers.

Families also receive spiritual support and encouragement. No longer bonded to the brick kiln and therefore unable to rest on Sundays, many now attend church and send their children to Sunday school, as well as praying together in the family home.

Barnabas Fund-supported schools give hope to a generation of children

Mahwish, twelve years old, thought she would never be able to go to school. “My father is a brick-kiln worker,” explains Mahwish. “He and my grandfather never went to school.” Like many other brick-kiln families, Mahwish's parents could not afford her school fees.

Now, thanks to the generosity of Barnabas Fund's supporters, Mahwish is able to receive the education that was not available to previous generations. Her favourite subject is

English, and she hopes when she is older to become a nurse.

Barnabas Fund's project partners have set up the schools to provide for children like Mahwish so that they can develop the skills and knowledge to succeed in life, as well as learning more about their Christian faith. Along with free school places they provide the equipment needed – school bags, books, pencils and paper – as well as helping with the provision of new school buildings. Families who are able to are encouraged to make a small donation to the schools, but this is on a purely voluntary basis.

There are currently 33 schools for brick-kiln families, with 73 teachers who care for 1,986 children. Girls especially are encouraged to attend school in a country in which women are particularly disadvantaged and Christian women doubly so.

Literacy and numeracy classes help adults to develop key skills

Education, though, is not just for the children. Most adults in the brick kilns are unable to read, write or do simple sums. But Barnabas Fund supports a programme of adult literacy and numeracy for the adults of brick-kiln families.

Shamin, a mother of three, was happy when her children had the opportunity to go to school for the first time, but found that she was unable to help them in their studies. "I was unable to give any kind of help to them," she recalls. "I did not even know how to hold a pencil." Shamin prayed to God that she too would have the opportunity to learn, and soon that prayer was answered.

Simple and easy-to-understand classroom lessons are designed to teach the basics of mathematics, reading and writing. Classroom materials are based on the Bible, and many students are delighted to be able to read the Bible for themselves for the first time.

"When I started to come here I did not know anything," explains Shamin, "but now with help of our teacher I can write letters, and can solve add-and-subtract questions. She teaches us about the Bible as well. In this school I learnt some new Gospel songs, Bible verses and hymns."



With your help, Shamin's prayer that she would have the opportunity to study has been answered

Vocational training provides new opportunities to break the cycle of poverty

Many women support their husbands by helping them to work at the brick kiln. Workers are paid by how many bricks they produce, and working together allows couples and families to produce more. This, however, prevents women from seeking their own employment.

Barnabas Fund partners have therefore set up a vocational programme for young women from brick-kiln families to learn sewing and embroidery skills, thereby increasing their options for employment.

Haleema represents the fourth generation of her family to work at the brick kiln. She and her husband have found it very difficult to provide for their children, but now Haleema says that she can save money by making clothes for her children as well as generating an income by providing tailoring and clothing repairs to others in her community.



Haleema, a Christian, hopes her new embroidery skills will enable her to generate more income for her family

Support for new small businesses

Barnabas Fund has also provided supplies and equipment to enable families to start their own small businesses. This allows those who would otherwise have no option but to continue their back-breaking labour at the brick kiln to undertake different work.

It also means a year-round income in contrast to brick-kiln workers who are without work during the seasonal lay-off during the monsoon rains in July and August. More recently, brick kilns in the Punjab have been forced into a second annual lay-off from December to February due to thick smog during those months.

In total 50 families have been helped in this way so far. Eight have been gifted with motorcycle rickshaws, eight with motorcycle goods carriers, six with donkey carts, two with handcarts, 14 with shop premises and stock to open a grocery store, and twelve families have each been provided with three goats. As well as these grants our project partners are on hand to check the progress of the new businesses while also offering advice and guidance.

The result of all this is that freed brick-kiln families are able to keep themselves from falling again into poverty, debt and bonded labour.

Project references:

41-1356 (repaying debts of brick-kiln workers)

41-1236 (Christian schools in brick-kiln areas)

41-1315 (adult literacy centres for brick-kiln workers)

PR1391 (vocational training for brick-kiln families, including sewing and embroidery)

PR1532 (small business start-ups for former brick-kiln workers)

Myanmar

Help and hope for those the world has forgotten

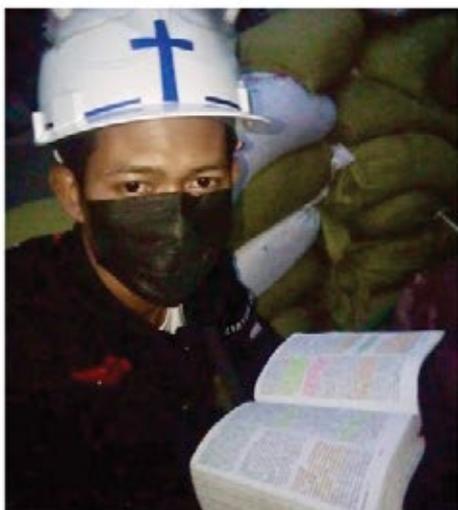
Barnabas Fund partners provide emergency relief to internally displaced Christians who have left everything behind

On

27 and 28 March Myanmar Army fighter jets launched aerial bombardments against civilians in

the Papun District of Karen State. At least three were killed, eight injured, and an estimated 11,000, many of whom are Christians, forced to flee their homes and join the thousands who have become either internally displaced persons (IDPs) or have sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

A Karen Christian leader who was leading a Bible study in the area at the time escaped with his life. "It was around 7pm when the army jet fighter dropped a bomb just feet away from us," he recounted. "We ran and the next bomb came even closer. Thank God we survived."



A Karen aid worker shares the Word of God with displaced Christians

A few days later, 3 April, the Myanmar Army – also known as the Tatmadaw – raided churches in Kachin State, ostensibly to investigate allegations that Christians were sheltering protest leaders and that church ministers were

involved in anti-coup activism. These allegations were unfounded.

These are just a few examples of the violence and repression faced by the Karen, Kachin and other ethnic-minority Christians since the military coup on 1 February this year which replaced the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and her party the National League for Democracy (NLD) with a military dictatorship.

The Karen, Kachin and Chin people are religious and ethnic outsiders in Myanmar (Burma), dominated by the religiously Buddhist and ethnically Burman majority, a dominance which the Tatmadaw seeks to maintain. Yet, thanks to our supporters, Barnabas Fund has been able to offer support to our persecuted brothers and sisters.

"Today is horrible; tomorrow is too remote to hope for"

"We have been constantly on the move, hiding from place to place. No house to live in, no work, nothing left. I did not see any future for my family, and we were so tired to run, to hide and live in constant fear." These are the words of "Maun" (not his real name), a displaced Karen Christian, husband and father of four. Hiding in the jungle, this family have barely enough food to live on – because of poor nutrition and exhaustion the mother cannot even breastfeed her one-month-old baby.

After the bombing in Karen State, the church leader who survived sought to capture the feelings of the internally displaced Christians in verse:

*I stared at death face to face and was spared for now
Don't know for how long
Food becomes tasteless,
totally deprived
Words become meaningless*

Don't even know what I should say

Don't even know what I should do

Bereft of reason

Today is horrible

Tomorrow too remote to hope for

Our contacts in Myanmar work hard to find families hiding in secret, to provide for them the help that they need, using aerial drones to discover their location. IDPs are given food such as rice, oil and tinned fish, other essentials including medicines, clothes and baby powder, as well as blankets, mats and tarpaulins as a means of constructing some sort of shelter. Relief workers also share God's word, providing believers with Bibles in their own language.

"Today is a happy day for my family," said Maun. "You brought us so many blessings ... we had left everything behind. I thought it was impossible for people to find us, but I think this is a miracle from God."

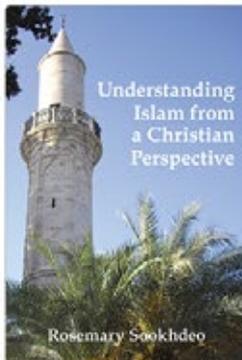
A real difference to our persecuted brothers and sisters

Violent repression of the majority-Christian ethnic groups – as well as the majority-Buddhist Shan and majority-Muslim Rohingya, among which are a number of Christians – has continued for many decades, even during the years of supposedly democratic government. The fear is that this repression will increase now that the Tatmadaw has full control of the country.

Yet your prayers and donations make a real difference to our persecuted brothers and sisters, giving hope back to those whom the world seems to have forgotten.

Project reference: 75-763
(Aid for persecuted Christians in Myanmar)

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE



Our pull-out series for 2021 is taken from *Understanding Islam from a Christian Perspective*, by Rosemary Sookhdeo, Barnabas Fund's International Director of Finance.

The following excerpts from her popular and informative book give invaluable insights into areas where the religion of Islam, which was established 600 years after Christ, has borrowed from Christianity and explains the key theological differences between the two religions.

CHAPTER TEN

Sin, Salvation and End Times

Sin and Islam

Sin is seen in a completely different way in Islam from how it is seen in Christianity. In Islam there is no consciousness of sin in relation to a righteous God or of the seriousness of it in relation to faith. Islam rejects the doctrine of original sin and the account of Adam's fall and its consequences for the "fall of mankind".⁷⁵ The Quran teaches that human beings are not "fallen" or separated from God.⁷⁶

Islam explains man's nature at birth as *fitrah* – a state of intrinsic goodness. Like Adam, people are born pure and sinless. "Every child is born in a state of *fitrah*, and social environment causes the individual to deviate from this state", writes Islamic scholar Yasien Mohamed.⁷⁷ This is very different from the Biblical teaching that we are "sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5) and "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

Islam does not conceive of sin in relation to a holy and righteous God. The missionary Samuel Zwemer pointed out how God's holiness is completely ignored in the Quran.⁷⁸

A Muslim will have no assurance of the forgiveness of sins

Sin is seen within the context of a legalistic framework as an act of wrongdoing and not specifically related to the human heart. Islam distinguishes between the greater and the lesser sins. Greater sins would include adultery, drinking alcohol, murder, homosexuality, false testimony and theft, amongst many others. Greater sins are more serious and will lead to punishment; the lesser sins are common to everyone and are much easier to be forgiven or overlooked. This breaking of the law can be remedied by good deeds.

To a Muslim the most serious sins would be:

- The sin of *shirk*, that is, associating someone else with Allah, is an unpardonable sin.

Christians commit this sin of *shirk* by associating someone else with Allah when they claim that Jesus is the Son of God.

- The sin of apostasy or leaving the Islamic religion is so serious that Sharia prescribes the death penalty for a sane adult man and for a woman either death or imprisonment until she repents. This can be the barrier to Muslims coming to Christ and the fear of committing this can bind them to the religion of Islam.
- Sins such as murder and adultery.

When we talk about Jesus taking our sin on Himself on the cross and giving us forgiveness of sin when we accept Him into our life this has little meaning for Muslims. As Christians we consider ourselves to be sinful in that we constantly do things that are contrary to what God desires.

The gravity of sin in Islam is diluted by treating sin as failing to remember God's instructions, rather than rebellion against God as it is viewed in Christianity.

The central Christian doctrine of the atonement, wherein our Lord Jesus takes upon Himself the punishment for our sin and becomes a mediator for the human race, is absent in Islam. Muhammad plays no mediatory role in the Quran, as the following verses make clear. "O ye who believe! Spend out of (the bounties) We have provided for you, before the Day comes when no bargaining (will avail), nor friendship nor intercession" (*sura* 2:254). In fact, according to a well-known *hadith*, Muhammad worried about future judgement on his own family. "O Safiyah, the Aunt of Allah's Apostle! I cannot save you from Allah's Punishment; O Fatima bint Muhammad [his daughter]! Ask me anything from my wealth, but I cannot save you from Allah's Punishment".⁷⁹

The Quran leaves Muslims with little assurance of salvation. As Christians, "since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1) and we are assured of salvation because "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Moreover, Jesus Himself assures His followers of eternal life when He says, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

Salvation and Islam

Salvation as we know it in Christianity does not really exist within Islam. Even the word “salvation” has no equivalent in Islamic thought. In Christianity sin causes separation from a holy God, and our sins are forgiven or blotted out when we receive salvation by the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. We look to the cross and resurrection, to Jesus dying for our sins and rising again for our justification, and to the assurance that we have of eternal life. In Christianity, there is an inextricable link between salvation and sin.

In contrast, Muslims understand the phrase “being saved” only in the context of being delivered from hell-fire to paradise, not in the context of sin’s causing separation from God and the assurance of eternal life. Many converts from Islam say that the Christian concept of salvation was the very thing that attracted them to Christ.

In Islam there is no assurance of heaven

Islam does not make it clear whether a person will go to heaven or hell. Whilst some texts say that all Muslims will have to go through hell before entering paradise, others indicate that those who believe and do right – the god-fearing – will enter the Gardens (*Jannah*) of Delight or Paradise.⁸⁰

Here we see the linking of believing and doing good works. However, the assurance of one’s eternal destiny and escape from the agony of hell-fire is lacking within Islam, and Muslims can only hope for Paradise but with no certainty. We need to share with Muslims that it is possible to have the assurance of heaven through putting our trust in Jesus Christ. This can be a very effective point to share in evangelism.

Islam teaches the assurance of salvation only in the exceptional case of martyrdom. People who die fighting for Islam or engaged in *jihad* are called *shahids* (martyrs or witnesses), and their actions are recognised as self-sacrificing and noble. Martyrdom is not regarded as suicide or even related to it. Muslims believe that *shahids* will go immediately to Paradise with all their sins forgiven. This act can be the only assurance of heaven after death for the Muslim. The martyr can then intercede for seventy of his relatives to enter Paradise immediately on their death.

A Muslim woman’s destiny in eternity

What happens when a Muslim woman dies? Does she face the same fate as her husband or is there an entirely different set of rules? What happens if a

woman decides to become a martyr? One Muslim woman caught before she could blow herself up expected to become “the purest and most beautiful form of angel at the highest level possible in heaven”^{81P}

However, Muhammad looked into hell and saw that the majority of its inhabitants were women. A *hadith* in Bukhari’s collection says, “Once Allah’s Apostle said to a group of women, ‘Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of Hell-fire were you (women).’”⁸²

This *hadith* and a number of others state that the majority of the people in hell are women. So how does a woman get to Paradise? Elsewhere, the *hadith* teaches that a woman gets to Paradise by being absolutely obedient to her husband. It is this that shows her piety and guarantees her eternal destiny. He is her paradise or her hell, and without obedience to her husband, there is no heaven for a woman.

The wives of the righteous and obedient are mentioned as accompanying their husbands in Paradise. Women in Paradise must be submissive, subordinate, veiled and secluded in the harems of heaven, watching quietly as their husbands make love with the beautiful *houris* (perpetual virgins) of Paradise. Man is her master on earth and she will be subjugated to him forever in heaven as well. There is no provision made for single women in heaven.

In evangelism to Muslim women, talking about the assurance and hope of heaven can really speak to their hearts. If they remain within Islam, they have a depressing future with no hope before them when they die. We need to share how we have this eternal destiny with the King of kings and Lord of lords and they can have this glorious and eternal future in front of them as well. Many Muslim women come to Christ to find this assurance of salvation.

Judgement day for Muslims

A Muslim can never be sure of salvation at the Last Judgement. The first thing to be judged will be prayer. Failure to pray can render a Muslim an unbeliever and will result in his being thrown into the fires of hell. To avoid hell he must repent before he dies, but even then he can never be sure of his destiny. A Muslim who has fallen into unbelief, like the person who leaves Islam, will suffer the eternal fires of hell. Those who have committed minor sins and have not repented will, after a period in hell, be able to enter Paradise.

At the Last Judgement, a person’s entire sum of good deeds will be weighed on the scales against the bad deeds, and if the good deeds outweigh the bad deeds, the person will be allowed to enter Paradise. A Muslim who has done few good deeds and has not kept the duties and obligations of Islam has little hope of Paradise; even if he has done numerous good deeds there is always the worry that the bad deeds might outweigh the good deeds. Salvation is by works alone.

Allah decides who will be saved and who will be damned

In the final analysis, “Allah wills what he wills”. *Sura* 14:4 reads, “Now Allah leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases”. *Sura* 7:178 supports this teaching. “Whom Allah doth guide – He is on the right path: Whom he rejects from His guidance – such are the persons who perish”. Allah decides who will be saved and who will be damned.

In the light of these verses, Muslim theologians developed the concept of God’s eternal decree. God has determined all things in advance and has written them down in the eternal book of his decrees. These include human actions. Thus, Allah decides a person’s salvation and damnation before their birth, and their personal history is merely the working out of Allah’s decree. Muslims hope the final day will reveal that the decree of the Divine has been favourable to them. Consistent with their view, however, they will not be inclined to say, “I am saved”, but rather to say, “I am saved if God wills”.

There is only one true God and all other ways are lost

The Ten Commandments in Exodus (20:3) make it clear that there is one true God. This is followed through in the New Testament with passages such as 1 Corinthians 8:6: “Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live”. In Ephesians 4:4-6 we read: “There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all”.

A good starting point for further conversation is Mark 12:28-29, as Muslims would agree with this: “Of all the commandments which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’”

However, it is important in our evangelism to Muslims to point out that we believe in one God and not three gods. As well as pointing out that we believe in one God we should mention that God is a triune God of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

It says very clearly in the Bible that there is salvation

in no other but Jesus Christ and all other ways are lost. This means that anyone who does not accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour is going to a lost eternity. We have a responsibility as Christians to share the Good News of Jesus Christ to those we come across.

The end times in Islam

Islam’s end-time scenario is radically different from Christianity’s. Muslims believe in the lesser and greater signs of the Hour. They believe that humankind will reach a state of great suffering and then the awaited Mahdi^a will appear. He will be the first of the greater signs of the Hour.

The Mahdi will rule until the False Messiah or Antichrist (*al-Masikh al-Dajjal* or *al-Masih al-Dajjal*), who will spread oppression and corruption, appears. The False Messiah will destroy humankind and the earth will witness the greatest tribulation in its history. Then *Isa* (as Jesus is called in Islam) will descend to earth and bring justice. The False Messiah will be killed, either by the Mahdi or by *Isa*, according to different traditions, ushering in a period of safety and security.

Gog and Magog will then appear and surprise humankind and corruption will take over again. Then *Isa* prays and Gog and Magog will die. Later, *Isa* will die and be buried alongside Muhammad. This will be followed by the appearance of the Beast, which will lead to the Day of Judgement.

^a The Mahdi, literally “the one who is guided”, is an eschatological figure mentioned in some *hadith* but not the Quran. There are a variety of beliefs about this end-time military saviour.

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Hope among the rubble

Barnabas helps Christians to rebuild lives shattered by Beirut blast



Many organisations assessed the damage to Elias' barber shop, but only Barnabas fixed it

Elias is a Christian and a barber living in Lebanon's capital, Beirut. Despite the many political and economic crises that his country has endured over the years, he managed to support himself and his loved ones with the income from his barber shop.

That all changed on 4 August 2020 when 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded in a warehouse at the port, killing more than 200 people and injuring 7,000.

The shockwaves shattered windows as far as 26 km away. More than 300,000 people, including many Christians, lost their homes or were temporarily displaced because of the damage wrought. Four of the five neighbourhoods worst affected were predominantly Christian.

Christian families given back their dignity

Elias' barber shop was one of thousands of business premises shattered by the blast. Suddenly, he had no work, no income and no means of supporting his family. "Many NGOs went to visit Elias and made reports," said our project partner in Beirut. "Yet it is only Barnabas that helped fix his shop so he and his family live in dignity."



Christians in Beirut sign for food and essential supplies provided by Barnabas

Barnabas helped repair at least 170 houses, apartments and businesses of Christians. The arrival of winter made the work more urgent as many homes that seemed to be relatively unharmed began to leak, and premises awaiting new doors and windows became vulnerable to water damage.



Retired bus driver George lives in Beirut with his sister, a cleaner at a Christian school. They struggled to buy food as well as medication for George's kidney condition. George, who reads his much-treasured Bible for many hours every day, thanks Barnabas supporters for helping him and his sister in their time of need

Our first set of grants also provided food for 3,400 Christian families, hygiene items for 1,000 families (such as sanitiser, disinfectant, toothbrushes etc), medical assistance for 112 families/individuals, and financial support for 274 Christians in need. Some of those helped were converts from Islam, who could not receive other aid because coming forward would put their lives at risk, or Christian refugees from Iraq and Syria.

Explosion a "final blow" to economy

Lebanon's economy was in meltdown and hyperinflation rife even before the explosion devastated its main

port. "In a country already struggling to survive too many crises, the explosion came as a final blow," said our project partner. In the year since the disaster the Lebanese pound fell to an all time low, having lost 85% of its value at the time of writing, causing poverty to soar in a country that relies heavily on imports. The price of basic foods, nappies and construction materials spiralled, medicines were in short supply and jobs previously thought secure were wiped out by the financial turmoil. Covid-19 has compounded the city's misery and hospitals are overflowing.



Barnabas enabled Georgette earn enough to sustain herself and her elderly brother

Georgette is a single Christian woman who lives with her elderly brother. She lost her job as a school cleaner after the explosion because the school was no longer able to keep paying her. Barnabas helped Georgette to set up a small business selling her homemade pickles and tomato sauces. "Thanks to Barnabas, she is not a beggar anymore," declared our partner. "She earns enough to enable her to live in dignity."

*Project reference: PR1533
(Needy Christians in Lebanon)*

Why suffering?

Suffering is the norm for all humanity. “Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). But why does God allow pain and destruction? He is good and all-powerful, so why does He not intervene and stop it? Especially, why does He allow His faithful followers to endure so much suffering?

The answer is found in Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil their sinful act of rebellion changed everything, everywhere in the universe – although, praise God, not for ever, as one day Christ will return and put all right again. But, for now, we are living with the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual impact on humankind, and the rest of creation, of the Fall. Even the realm of nature has turned against us and Satan delights in attacking us.

The Garden of Eden was a place of bliss and of blessing. There God had blessed the first two humans (Genesis 5:2). Indeed the whole world was full of blessing (Genesis 1:22, 28). But after the Fall, the ground was cursed.

Suffering was not God’s intention for the ordered and harmonious world He made, with God at its centre. But now Satan prowls around “like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). He is full of fury because he knows his time of power on earth is short (Revelation 12:12).

The serpent (identified later as the devil and Satan, Revelation 12:9) began by asking Eve whether God had banned her from eating “from any tree”. Eve knew the answer and boldly corrected the visitor, adding also God’s warning that if they ate from that tree they would die. Then the serpent produced his big lie, directly contradicting God: “You will not surely die.” The serpent added a plausible-sounding reason, containing the promise “you will be like God” (Genesis 3:1-5).

Eve’s thought processes as she yielded to temptation (Genesis 3:6) involved the same three factors that John identifies in his description of worldliness opposed to the Father (1 John 2:16): desire of the body (for food), desire of the eyes (for beauty) and pride (desire for power-giving knowledge and wisdom that would make her like God).

This prideful desire to be like God was the same reason that Satan himself fell (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:1-17).

Eve sinned because Satan tempted her and she succumbed. All our own daily struggles against sin can be traced back to Satan’s activities in the world.

But why did Satan himself sin and fall from heaven? No one tempted, tricked or cajoled him. His sin came entirely from within himself. That is the ultimate mystery of evil. Perhaps we should be thankful that we are unable to comprehend the most profound depths of pure evil. Just as God dwells in “unapproachable light” (1 Timothy 6:16) there is also an unapproachable darkness, in which evil is shrouded, leaving it a mystery that we cannot penetrate.

Deceit and desire

Eve sinned because of a combination of deceit and desire. The serpent deceived Eve. But did Eve also deceive herself as she listened to him? “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” (Jeremiah 17:9 AV).

As for desires, did she and Adam previously have good and right desires, which became perverted by that fateful conversation with the serpent? God intended them to enjoy the garden, its creatures and each other. Would not this enjoyment entail good, God-given desires, including a desire to be in the LORD’s presence?

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD
(Psalm 27:4 AV)

Eve committed the first human sin and immediately compounded it by getting Adam to sin too, who was apparently with her when she talked with the serpent.¹ Both Old and New Testaments have strong rebukes for those who cause others to sin (1 Kings 14:16; Matthew 5:19; 18:6).

The effects of Adam and Eve’s sin

The first effect of the “knowledge of good and evil” was Adam and Eve’s realisation that they were naked (Genesis 3:7). The shame they felt (Genesis 2:25) was an unfamiliar emotion. Rather than moving into an “exalted sphere of Divine life”,² their first knowledge of evil was the new guilt in their own hearts.

In the evening came God’s punishment: the serpent was cursed (Genesis 3:14), the ground was cursed (Genesis 3:17-18) and life was to become hard for Adam and Eve.

For Eve it would relate partly to childbearing (Genesis 3:16). God said He would greatly increase her *istavon*, usually translated “pain”. God told Adam

that henceforth growing food would require *istavon* (“painful toil” NIV). This is an unusual Hebrew word for “pain”. Although *istavon* the noun means “pain”, the same Hebrew root as a verb means to be filled with sorrow, grief or sadness. So the pain of Adam and Eve’s punishment was not ordinary pain but a pain linked to sorrow and grief i.e. a spiritual and mental state of mind manifesting itself in physical pain. The cure for this pain is therefore spiritual.³

The other part of God’s message for Eve was that her desire (*teshuqah* in Hebrew) would be for her husband and he would rule over her. But *teshuqah* is better translated as “turning to”, meaning that a wife will have single-minded devotion to her husband, and he will rule over her.⁴

Death

Another result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience was death (Genesis 2:17). They had previously lived in perfect happiness and perfect health and, says Calvin,

*would have passed into heaven without death, and without injury. Death, therefore, is now a terror to us; first, because there is a kind of annihilation, as it respects the body; then, because the soul feels the curse of God.*⁵

So, the death they were to suffer was both physical and spiritual. This death begins, says Calvin, with the wretchedness of human existence after the Fall, so that the miseries of life are “a kind of entrance into death”.⁶ This long process of dying, both physically and spiritually, began as soon as the fruit was eaten.

Before the Fall, sorrow, pain and death did not exist. A time is coming when they will vanish away again, for in the new heaven and the new earth “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Then there will be two trees of life (Revelation 22:2a) and no tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for there is no possibility of sin in heaven (Revelation 21:27). Their leaves will be like healing herbs, to restore broken people and broken relationships (Revelation 22:2b). And “No longer will there be any curse” (Revelation 22: 3). The ground of heaven will be like the ground of Eden, without thistles or thorns. The results of the Fall will have been completely reversed.

But until then, we are living with the effects of the Fall. Life is a struggle, fraught with disease, anguish, error, doubt and conflict. Humankind is indelibly stained with sin (“original sin” as theologians call it), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), both death of the body and death of the soul.

Five fundamental sources of suffering

The ordered peace of the Garden of Eden disappeared after the Fall, replaced by disharmony, disorder and chaos, which affect all our relationships.

1. Our relationship with God

Our sins and iniquities separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2). The severing of the sublime relationship that

bound God to His rational creatures was the first consequence of the first sin. Adam and Eve hid themselves from God, for they dared not meet Him after they had sinned (Genesis 3:8). But very soon they no longer had the option of meeting Him, because He banished them permanently (Genesis 3:23-24). They – and we – became alienated from our Maker and this alienation from God lies at the root of all our suffering.

We no longer know who we are, where we belong, why we exist or the purpose of life. We are aware of an emptiness in our lives and we try to fill the void with physical, material or emotional paraphernalia. But we are suffering from a spiritual sickness and all such efforts just create greater sickness in the human psyche. We are lonely, isolated and afraid.

It is only through our Lord Jesus Christ that we can be at peace with God again, justified through faith in the One who died for us on the cross, and able even to rejoice in our sufferings (Romans 5:1-3). As an old hymn says, “Jesus, I will trust Thee, trust Thee with my soul, guilty, lost and helpless, Thou canst make me whole.”⁷

2. Our relationship with ourselves

Alienation from God and the loss of our identity in Him created an internal trauma, a restlessness in our hearts, an inner chaos. Anchorless, we are adrift. Lacking confidence in God, we place our confidence in ourselves – leading to anxiety and disaster. We have desires that cannot be met. We are no longer whole and at peace. Rather, we are at war with ourselves, as the realm of the Spirit and the realm of the flesh wrestle with each other (Romans 7:18-20). We seek all the time for that internal wholeness (*shalom*) which Adam and Eve enjoyed before the Fall, the “perfect peace” of those who trust in the LORD (Isaiah 26:3).

3. Our relationships with others

Human relationships with one another were also damaged by the Fall. In the very next generation, the first murder occurred when jealous, angry Cain killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1-8). Human violence and destructiveness have been with us ever since. Trust is gone and wrong desires have come, causing “fights and quarrels” (James 4:1-2).

But in the grace and purposes of God, not only can individuals be restored to a right relationship with God by the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1), not only can good relationships with one another be restored through Christ (Ephesians 2:14) but also He will bring “unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ” (Ephesians 1:10). The day will come when nations no longer fight one another (Isaiah 2:4) but bring their splendours into the City that is lit by the glory of God (Revelation 21:24,26).

4. Our relationship with the rest of creation

Even our relationship with the realm of nature is affected by the Fall. Since God cursed the ground, nature has been like an enemy. We are also in danger from a natural world which is itself in turmoil, and groaning in its frustration and bondage (Romans 8:19-21). Earthquakes and storms, drought and floods,

parasites and pathogens, stinging insects and crop-eating pests, poisonous plants, wild animals hungry for human flesh – all of these will be with us until the time of God’s holy mountain.

The world that God created “very good” (Genesis 1:31) is no longer flawless. We must still take care of it, as God instructed Adam (Genesis 2:15), but it is imperfect, as we are, and we must not make an idol of it.

5. Our relationship with Satan

We have an enemy (Genesis 3:15) who hates us and seeks to destroy us. Everywhere the devil goes depravity, destruction and death follow in his wake. Matthew Henry says of this verse:

A perpetual quarrel is here commenced between the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of the Devil ... war is proclaimed between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. That war in heaven between Michael and the Dragon began now.⁸

As William Philip has pointed out, with reference to Genesis 3:15, the first definition of a believer in the Bible is a fighter against evil. Struggling shows that our faith is real: we have not given up the battle. For the ancient serpent will keep struggling against the Church until he is thrown into the fiery lake (Revelation 20:2,10). It is a fantasy to expect perfect health, or indeed sinlessness, as a result of deciding to follow Christ. This world is a war zone for the Gospel and will be so until the End.⁹

These five areas of relationship are the catastrophic consequences of the Fall and the reason that the beautiful and good world God created is now a world of suffering.

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO

International Director, Barnabas Fund

¹ We are told in 1 Timothy 2:14 “Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” This surely refers to the order of events: Eve was the one who first ate the fruit, followed by Adam.

² Basil F.C. Atkinson, *The Pocket Commentary of the Bible: The Book of Genesis*, Worthing, Henry E. Walter Ltd, 1954, p.44.

³ Ariel, “Deeper Hebrew Meanings from the Garden of Eden”, Hebrewversity, <https://www.hebrewversity.com/deeper-hebrew-meanings-garden-eden/> [accessed 16 April 2021]

⁴ A.A. Macintosh, “The Meaning of Hebrew *הַקִּינִי*”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* vol. LXI no. 2 (Autumn 2016), pp.365-87.

⁵ John Calvin, *A Commentary on Genesis*, first published in Latin in 1554, translated and edited by John King in 1847, London, Banner of Truth Trust reprinted from the Calvin Translation Society, 1965, p.127.

⁶ Calvin p.127.

⁷ Mary Jane Walker, 1855.

⁸ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 1706, London, Ward, Lock & Co., new edition, 1857?, vol. 1, p.18, referring also to Revelation 12:7.

⁹ Sermon at the Tron Church, Glasgow, Scotland, 21 March 2021.

Land of fear

Terror and chaos overwhelm Mozambique’s troubled far north

In Mozambique’s far north, nowadays known as the “land of fear”, terror and instability are raging. In this Muslim-majority and resource-rich area of a poor and underdeveloped Christian-majority country, Islamist militants have launched at least 831 attacks since 2017, killing at least 2,658 people.



Since an intense wave of terror attacks began in November 2020, thousands of displaced people have taken refuge on the beach at Pemba, the capital of Cabo Delgado, crammed into makeshift shelters



Almost one million people are facing severe hunger across northern Mozambique due to jihadi violence, according to a report from the World Food Programme published in April 2021. Around 700,000 are estimated to be internally displaced in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, where the Islamist violence is centred.

Until the beginning of 2021, food was still arriving by boat from Tanzania, through the mangrove swamps, but then the jihadists cut the supply lines, bringing the real possibility of starvation.

An Islamist terror group, known locally as Al-Sunna wa Jama'a or Al Shabaab (not the Somali-based group), has wreaked havoc in the region since the insurgency began in 2017. It aims to establish an Islamic caliphate in oil- and gas-rich Cabo Delgado, an area where violence was previously unknown. Barnabas Fund contacts confirm that anyone who will not embrace the jihadists' beliefs is attacked, often with shocking brutality, including Christians who refuse to deny Christ, and moderate Muslims.

Beheading, skinning and cutting off the limbs of their victims are the group's typical methods. "What they do to the people they capture and kill I have never seen anywhere in Africa," said an expert.

"I don't know where my wife is. I haven't heard of her since that bad day"

"When they captured us, they set aside the Christians and non-Muslims," recalled Mani, a traumatised Christian survivor of an Islamist attack on his town of Moçimboa da Praia. "After they divided us, we had to watch the non-Muslims and Christians be decapitated." Mani was able to flee and after eight hours on foot reached Muti, a small village near the coastal town of Palma. He travelled on to the provincial capital Pemba by boat in the hope of being reunited with his daughter and sister.

"I don't know where my wife is. I haven't heard of her since that bad day," said Mani. "I lost everything, my documents, money and everything was burned by the



Three-quarters of a million people have fled Islamist violence in the far north of Mozambique

attackers. My family here barely has enough food for themselves. Without this gift from God, I really don't know how me and my little girl would have got through a day," he said thanking Barnabas for the aid his family received.

At least 50 people beheaded in a three-day massacre

In one of the worst attacks of 2020, the jihadists beheaded more than 50 people on a football pitch in Muatide village during three days of ferocious violence in November. Two people were beheaded in a nearby community when gunmen shouting "Allahu Akbar" stormed into Nanjaba village, firing weapons and setting homes alight.

Islamic State boasted of killing Christians after ruthless assault on Palma

A ruthless and prolonged assault on Palma began on 24 March 2021, and saw beaches strewn with bodies. The Islamist terror group Islamic State boasted on its Internet news site of killing at least 55 people, including Christians and other civilians, Mozambican soldiers, and "crusaders" (meaning Westerners). It took ten days before

the Mozambique army succeeded in retaking the town.

More than 16,500 people fled the stricken district by vehicle, boat or foot. Many, including children, walked for days through the bush to find safety, some arriving with swollen and injured feet.

In some towns, the population swelled to double or triple normal levels as the displaced people arrived. Some found shelter with other families – who had little enough even for themselves.

A survivor who walked for three days without food and water, covering about 30 miles, to reach Namoto on the Tanzanian border said, "Many children are dying in the bush ... People have been captured and others have died."

Many hundreds of locals and foreign workers were rescued by boat, taking them to refuge at Pemba, 155 miles south of Palma. Five days after the assault about 1,400 people arrived at the port in a single vessel.

Barnabas Fund has been sending food to some of the neediest displaced Christians. This includes staples such as rice, beans and cooking oil, as well as ePap, a porridge containing protein, vitamins and other vital nutrients to bring health to the malnourished.

Iranian Christian converts pressurised to renounce faith

IRAN



Esmail Narimanpour, Hojjat Lotfi Khalaf, Mohammad Ali Torabi and Alireza Varak-Shah, all residents of Dezful, were arrested by Iranian security forces [Image credit: Middle East Concern]

Four Christian converts from Islam were forced to sign an agreement stating they would not attend any house churches or associate with Christians as a condition of their temporary release after two days of interrogation.

Esmail Narimanpour, Mohammad Ali Torabi, Alireza Varak-Shah and Hojjat Lotfi-Khalaf, arrested in Dezful in south-west Iran on 19 April, also had to pledge to report back to the Intelligence Office immediately upon being summoned.

At least ten other Christian converts released after a day of interrogation in Dezful on 22 April were also forced to sign the agreements.

A Barnabas contact said this kind of agreement, widely used by Iranian intelligence officials, serves as a way to pressure people into re-converting to Islam and denouncing the Christian faith.

Meanwhile, a Christian couple have been summoned to begin jail sentences for belonging to a house church in Tehran. Homayoun Zhavah, 62, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, is sentenced to two years' imprisonment and his wife Sara Ahmadi, 42, to eight years.

Eritrea frees 14 Christians after four years in jail

ERITREA

Fourteen Christians have been released in Eritrea after four years of incarceration in Dahlak Island Prison on the Red Sea.

A Barnabas contact said the men are believed to be the last to be freed from a group of 66 Christians detained at the same time. One of the original group died two years ago "from illness", according to the authorities.

The reason for the latest releases is not known; however, Eritrean church leader Dr Berhane Asmelash said it is thought the Christian men will be forced to join the army. Forced conscription into the Eritrean armed forces is greatly feared, not least because the compulsory military service can last for many years, even decades.

The men's release came shortly after authorities freed on 11 April all but one of 23 Christians arrested at a prayer meeting in the capital Asmara in March. The Christian denied release remains in prison.

Another twelve Christians arrested in March at a prayer meeting in Assab, about 660 miles from Asmara, remain in Assab Prison.

At the time of writing it was thought that at least 129 believers were being detained in Eritrea's jails, often enduring inhumane and brutal conditions; however, the exact figure is not known.

Christian convert in Saudi Arabia acquitted of theft

SAUDI ARABIA

A Christian convert from Islam in Saudi Arabia has been acquitted of theft after a court ruled there was no evidence.

The Christian, named only as "A", had been accused of theft by his sister's husband. "A" had reportedly aided his sister, also a Christian convert, and her children to escape from Saudi Arabia.

Lawyers representing his brother-in-law were unable to bring any evidence, leading the judge to acquit "A" and dismiss the case.

"A" faces two further court cases, for helping his sister to flee against the wishes of her family, and – in a separate incident – allegedly trying to convert Muslims to Christianity.

"A" had reportedly aided his sister, also a Christian convert, and her children to escape from Saudi Arabia

The latter charge arose from a conversation in a restaurant in 2020, in which "A" allegedly discussed his own conversion.

The brother-in-law of "A" has threatened violence against the wife and son of "A", who may be vulnerable to attack should he be imprisoned.

"A" has already spent time in prison and been flogged for his faith in Christ and for helping his sister leave the country.

Church ministers among 24 Christians massacred by militants in Ethiopia

ETHIOPIA

Twenty-four Christians, including two church ministers, were killed by armed militants in western Ethiopia on Sunday 7 March.

The Christians were attending a church service in Horo Guduru Welega zone (formerly Welega Province).

Members of the militant group OLF Shene, an offshoot of the Oromo Liberation Front thought to be active in west and

south Oromia, surrounded the church and forced members of the congregation to hand over their mobile phones.

The armed men then killed the two ministers outside the church, before taking the other Christians to a nearby forest where they too were killed.

"Please include Ethiopia in your prayers," urged a Barnabas contact. "Christians are living in utter fear day in and day out."

Islamic terrorists seek out and kill two Christians in attack on Nigerian town

NIGERIA



Kidnappers released a video showing students abducted from a Nigerian forestry college held at gunpoint. All the forestry students were eventually freed

Two Christians were sought out and killed by members of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) after ISWAP took control of Geidam town in Nigeria's northern Yobe State on 23 April, causing around 2,000 residents to flee.

“So far they have killed two Christians and two Muslim school teachers. They went to their homes and slaughtered them”

“Everybody is running away because the insurgents have started killing people who are Christians and those with Western education,” said a resident.

“So far they have killed two Christians and two Muslim school teachers. They went to their homes and slaughtered them,” said another local.

It was one of a series of deadly assaults on Christians in less than

four weeks. Gunmen attacked Sunday morning worship at a church in Kaduna State on 25 April, killing one worshipper and abducting four others.

One Christian died and a further four were abducted in an attack on a church bus in Kaduna State on 6 April. In Benue State a church minister and three other Christians were killed by gunmen who struck just as a morning service was closing on 30 March.

Two Christian women were among five students murdered by kidnappers following their abduction from Greenfield University in Kaduna State on 20 April. Their bodies were discovered on 22 April alongside the remains of a Muslim student. The bodies of two other abducted students were found four days later.

In a separate development, kidnappers released on 4 May the remaining 29 students, who are mainly Christian, that they abducted from the College of Forestry Mechanisation in Kaduna State on 11 March. Ten other students had been previously freed by the gang.

The release has also been confirmed of eight Christians who were abducted from their church minibus on 26 March in Kaduna State.

In Kwara State, at least 20 Christians were injured when a mob of Muslims attacked a church where Christians were gathered for

a peaceful protest against a state government directive that Christian schools must allow female Muslim pupils to wear a hijab.

Church leaders stated that allowing pupils to wear Islamic dress goes against the schools' Christian values and pointed out that allowing Islamic dress would aid terrorists engaged in school abductions to quickly identify Christian children.

Nineteen injured in suicide bomb attack on Indonesian church

INDONESIA

Nineteen people were injured when two suicide bombers blew themselves up outside a church on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi on 28 March, as the congregation celebrated Palm Sunday.

The two bombers, a man and a woman, arrived on a motorcycle at a side entrance of the church in Makassar but were stopped from entering by a security guard. Both bombers died at the scene.

The following day, Indonesian police arrested 13 people and seized powerful explosives after a series of raids.

Police said the bombers were a married couple who belonged to Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), a group with links to the Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) terrorist group. JAD is suspected of carrying out suicide attacks on three churches in the city of Surabaya in 2018, killing 13 people.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo condemned the attack. “Terrorism is a crime against humanity and has nothing to do with any religion,” he said. “All religious teachings reject terrorism.”



The scene at the side entrance to the church after suicide bombers riding a motorcycle detonated their explosives as Christians inside celebrated Palm Sunday



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Campaigns update

It's not too late to sign our petition calling for the UK government to recognise the Armenian Genocide

Thank you to everyone who has signed our petition calling on the UK government to officially recognise as genocide the mass murder of Armenian, Assyrian, Syriac and Greek Christians in the Ottoman Empire before, during and after the First World War. So far 12,725 of you added your names to our call for the government to formally acknowledge these historic atrocities.

Between 1893 and 1923 some 1.5 million Armenians died in the Ottoman Empire in a policy of extermination of Christian minorities. In addition some 2.25 million Assyrian, Greek and Syriac Christians were also killed within Ottoman territories between 1914 and 1923, making a total of 3.75 million Christians killed.

Recognition of the first Armenian Genocide may help to avert a second one.

There is still time to join our campaign. Please sign the petition to the UK government enclosed with this magazine and encourage family, friends and others to follow your example. You are welcome to photocopy it. Further copies of this petition are available from 9 Priory Row, Coventry, CV1 5EX or to download from: www.barnabasfund.org/armenian-genocide

US President Joe Biden recognises the Armenian Genocide for the first time

On 24 April Joe Biden became the first US president to formally recognise the mass killings of Armenians and other Christians as genocide, declaring, "Let us renew our shared resolve to prevent future atrocities from occurring anywhere in the world."

Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director of Barnabas Fund, had written a personal letter to President Biden. Dr Sookhdeo has also written to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Our petition calls upon the governments of the UK, Australia and New Zealand to also recognise the Armenian Genocide.

What the UK government says

Thank you to supporters who have written to their MPs to urge the UK government to recognise the Armenian Genocide.

The government is making the argument that it is a matter for the courts rather than politicians to decide whether a mass killing constitutes "genocide". You can respond to this argument by pointing out that in other cases – such as that of the Uyghurs in China – MPs have declared that genocide has taken place. In several other countries, including the United States, politicians – not judges – have made the decision to recognise the Armenian Genocide.

Remind your MP that these matters are of more than just historic interest. The invasion of ethnic-Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey, and subsequent accounts of war crimes including torture, execution of civilians, and destruction of churches has raised fears of a new Armenian genocide.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged to speak up for persecuted Nigerian Christians

6,537 of you signed our open letters to Commonwealth leaders (including 3,852 who signed the letter to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson) asking them to raise persecution of Christians in Nigeria as a matter of concern at the 2021 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting beginning 21 June in Rwanda. God willing, by the time you are reading this, the letter will have been delivered to 10 Downing Street. We do not know, at the time of writing, whether Mr Johnson will have acted on it.

A "Christian genocide" – USCIRF

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) warned in April 2021 of a "Christian genocide" if the government of Nigeria cannot protect Christians from Islamic terrorism.

USCIRF committee member Gary L. Bauer said, "Nigeria's government seems unable or unwilling to stop the growing carnage. Radical Islamists are committing violence inspired by what they believe is a religious imperative to 'cleanse' Nigeria of its Christians. They must be stopped." This violence is still ongoing.

The Prime Minister was asked to direct the Commonwealth Heads of Government to consider diplomatic pressure and policy responses to the following:

1. the Nigerian Government's failure to respond adequately to the violence;
2. the need for persecuted communities to be protected; and
3. the need for Nigerian authorities to bring perpetrators of violence to justice.

Thank you for supporting our brothers and sisters in Nigeria by your signature on the Open Letter. Please continue to uphold them in your prayers.

In Touch

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Help fill our food.gives box

We need YOU! Barnabas Fund is launching food.gives, where you (or your church) will be able to donate dried food from a selected list for poor and persecuted Christians globally.

Using our long established and trusted network of Barnabas Fund partner churches, we can now channel not just your generous financial donations, but also dry foodstuffs from Christians in the West, through Christians, to hungry Christians in places of pressure and persecution.

You Share. We Ship

Food.gives is really simple. This is how it works.

Inform us on **024 7623 1923** or **info@barnabasfund.org** or via **www.food.gives** if you are willing to:

- Commit to putting together a monthly food box as an **individual** or as a **family**;
- Be a representative of this initiative in your church, encouraging your **church** family to donate food to your global Christian family;

We will send you the relevant Starter Pack, depending on the above. This will include:

- Information leaflet/s;
- A food box for the church and/or for yourself (or family);
- Poster (for church only);

And once your box is full, let us know and we will arrange for it to be collected. You can then start with the next food.gives box

Harvest Thanksgiving. Why not ask your church to donate their harvest gifts from our list of selected food items? Then we can collect and ship them to needy Christians in India or elsewhere.



Save the date for SCAAW 2021

Suffering Church Action and Awareness Week this year runs from **Sunday 31 October to Sunday 7 November**. The theme will be *"God's faithfulness in times of suffering"* and we will be focusing on Isaiah 40:1-11.

Be a part of SCAAW as we stand with our suffering Church family in thought, prayer and practical action. You can make a difference to the lives of our poor and persecuted brothers and sisters by praying, raising funds and informing others about the persecution of Christians by holding an event at your local church or group.

Sisters raise money to help Pakistani Christian widows

Sisters Alice and Leah Hicklin have raised more than £300 for Barnabas to help us provide monthly food parcels to Christian widows in Pakistan who are struggling to feed their families.

The girls, aged eight and six, from Midlothian in Scotland, UK, decided to host an online bake sale after discussing at home about what it must be like to be hungry.

For their fundraiser, they picked five delicious treats, including fruity oat bars and marshmallow krispies, to tempt customers to their JustGiving website and posted buyers a box of their chosen baked goodie in exchange for a minimum donation of £6.

Mum Jacqueline Hicklin said that, together with their four-year-old brother Matthew, the girls helped with all the baking and the packaging. "They were thrilled to be able to raise £336," said Jacqueline. "Alice worked out that it was enough to feed a family for 16 months!"

Project reference: PR1460 Christian widows in Pakistan



Sisters Alice and Leah delight in the results of their baking

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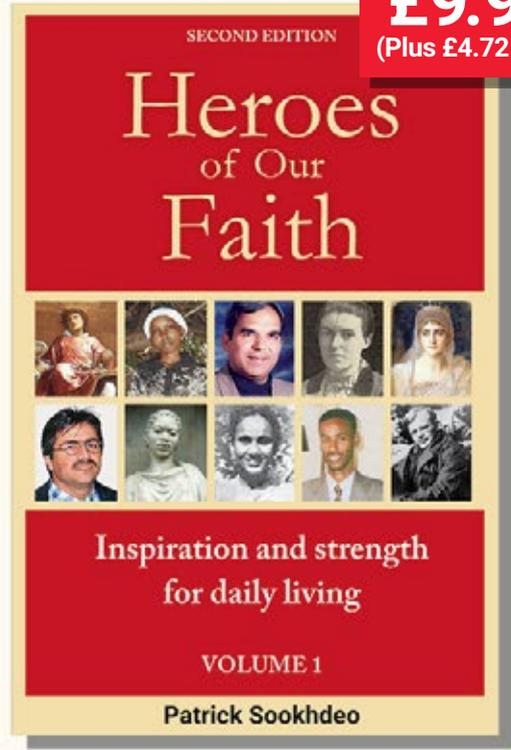
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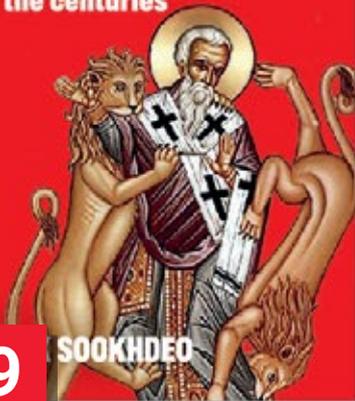
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