



February 2018

Dear Ministry Partner,

Warm greetings in the Savior's name! May you have a wonderful peace and a wonderful direction as the year comes clearly into view! "For such is God, our God forever and ever, He will guide us into eternity" (Psalm 48:14).

**PERSECUTION . . . *This is the story in India.***

Already this year I've been there and back. The atmosphere is hostile: It's persecution "hot and heavy" these days.

One of our workers in the south was blocked by a group of Hindus. They got him out of the car and tied him up. They broke all windows of his car and tied him to a tree—near an ant hill.

Maybe this was "mild" stuff by Indian persecution standards, but he still had to be treated at a hospital—and now he faces his work without a car . . . and with the constant reminder that he's living and working in a world of danger.

*This is the same region where two years ago, two workers were stopped in their car—a mob threw firebombs into the car and burned them alive.*

I know we see worse things in the movies, so perhaps there is no shock to us in hearing of such afflictions. But this is reality. And this physical persecution is a symptom of a spiritual battle—a type of warfare which has moved from "cold war" status to a totally "hot war."

And, sad to say, *there is a promise of much more, much worse, to come. . . .*

In the north, the Hindus used to tolerate, and even respect, the Christian schools we work with. Over the many decades of colonial rule, the British established a solid, positive reputation for these schools. But today, the Hindus have been emboldened by Prime Minister Modi and his Hindu agenda.

One disturbing example: Hindu groups announced that on January 22 they would plant a tree in every school in honor of Saraswati, the goddess of education. From this point on, they will insist on the children being required to pray once a day to Saraswati at the tree in the yard. By the time you read these words, this assault on India's schoolchildren will have already occurred.



Is it legal? After a long history of religious tensions, the constitution of India “guarantees” freedom of religion. Articles 25 through 28 of their constitution also position India as a “secular state,” neither meddling in religion nor opposing it.

But Prime Minister Modi, with his well-known personal background in Hindu radicalism, is brazenly disrespecting the constitution. He is clearly advancing an agenda driven by the vision of a *total revival of Hinduism*—the imposition of Hinduism on every man, woman, and child in the nation.

What can we do?

**First, my friend, we’ve got to pray.**

We need to pray because this is a spiritual battle. India is not the sole battlefield. Our own country, the United States of America, is also caught in a great spiritual battle where emboldened rogue leaders believe they know what’s best and work in ways that subvert our Constitution.

Are we praying? Even though Jesus tells us prayer is powerful, it’s largely absent from most places of worship! Most individuals also ignore prayer.

Consider the legend of Drummond’s Bar in the little Texas town of Mount Vernon. The bar’s owner began construction on a new building to increase their business, but the local Baptist church launched a campaign of petitions and prayers to block the bar from opening. Work progressed right up until the week before opening—when lightning struck the bar, and it burned to the ground.

The church folk were rather smug about it—this is, until the bar owner sued the church on the grounds that the congregation was ultimately responsible for the demise of his building! In court, the church vehemently denied all responsibility—rejected any connection to the building’s destruction.

The judge looked over the court briefs filed by both parties. “I don’t know how I’m going to decide this,” he said, “but from the paperwork, it appears we have a bar owner who believes in the power of prayer and an entire congregation that does not!”

It’s a funny story, but the judge’s insight is painfully true. The fact is that prayer is missing from most folks’ lives, even while it’s desperately needed!



Yet, even so, our situation is not hopeless. Far from it.

In our ministry, by God's grace, we're seeing victory on every front! We're witnessing accelerated church planting even in India, the site of hot persecution.

Praise God—He always leads us to victory!

With victory guaranteed, He calls us to rally around Him . . . to engage in the work He leads us in. *Persecution? Yes. Withdrawal? No.* As the late Dr. E.V. Hill used to say, "The Lord never saved nobody to run to second base and then go sit in the dugout. Don't forget third base! *You can't go for home without third base!*"

We must stay engaged in the harvest. And **prayer is not our only calling.** **We have work to do.** We are called to be active in our own *personal* circle of influence, *as well as worldwide*—until the Lord of the Harvest says we are done!

I was powerfully reminded of this truth just yesterday. I needed to conduct some business about an hour and a half away from home, and I invited a friend named Chuck to accompany me. I met him several months ago, but I had only talked to him a couple of times. Yet I could see that he is a lonely man. . . .

Chuck's wife divorced him, then moved away and remarried. His daughter and granddaughter have also moved far away. Chuck is a diabetic, and he's come up empty at the end of his career.

I decided to invite him to ride with me, to spend the day together. Chuck happily accepted. For about half the drive, our conversation covered a number of random topics; then I asked him about his childhood, his parents, the significant people in his life. Church background? He had none.

I shared my upbringing—surprisingly similar to his—but also my discovery of Christianity. I told him about the huge difference that Jesus made in my life. I shared Jesus' parable of the laborers in the vineyard from Matthew 20. I noted how the master gave the same recompense to the last ones as he gave to the first ones. Then I asked Chuck if he wanted to be "hired on."

He was very ripe. He was ready!



We had a glorious lunch. I can't even remember what I ate. On the way back, we went by a Christian bookstore and got him a Bible—a study Bible that explains what each book and chapter is about. Chuck was beaming! He thanked me three different times for the life-changing day we had enjoyed together.

That evening, he texted me a selfie—of himself happily reading his new Bible!

**GAME ON!**

*My friend, there is a battle both far and near.* The Lord says we are to be involved in “both/and” mode. Not just our immediate Jerusalem, not just our local Judea, but here AND everywhere: “You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Jesus is our Leader. Any group, club, corporation, or local church takes on cultural and core value cues from its leadership. The church is to take its cues from Christ, the Head of the Church.

But do we? Many times we're influenced by the “under shepherds” around us, rather than by the Great Shepherd of the sheep.

Paul defined our calling, our course of action, in 1 Corinthians 11:1: “Follow my example,” he ordered, “as I follow the example of Christ.” You and I must make sure we fully understand the example of Christ so we can be sure of the standard for our leaders and for ourselves.

Christ, the Head, the Lord of the Harvest, is clear in His commission to us, the church. He calls us all to engage as one body in the ministry of reconciliation, offering God's only agency of reconciliation on earth: “I am the way, the truth, the life,” Jesus declares; “no one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Today, I invite you to join the Lord with me in the battle both far and near . . . to fulfill our commission and our calling as the Lord leads us in faith and not in fear! Let us seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, that He may add all other things unto us, day by day, this year.

**We must pray—pray for our brothers and sisters in India and worldwide, especially those facing harsh persecution.**

**But we must also work—and the work can only go forward as God's people give.**



**Give to send workers into the harvest fields! They are willing to risk persecution, even death—but they need our support.**

*Please give generously today to empower them with the strength of Christ!*

I look forward to hearing from you quickly. Thank you in advance for being part of what God is doing through our ministry together. God bless you!

For the Gospel,

Dr. Manny Hernandez

P.S. You can pray and give with confidence—to advance the harvest work. You have the evidence of what God will do through your generosity! We can't stop. We can't rest. We can't retreat from the enemy's onslaught.

If our brothers and sisters in India and elsewhere are willing to risk everything to stay engaged in the spiritual battle, we must stand with them. Thank you again for stepping up to Christ's Great Commission!