

Alive to God – Grant Lock

This is International Week of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Grant and Janna Lock spent 24 years in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Grant shares personal experiences, and reports from around the globe. He challenges us to pray and stand alongside the suffering Church.

Monday 7th November

The bearded Afghan taxi driver half turns his head, “Are you a Christian?” Janna, alone in the back, adjusts her head covering. Is he trying to trap me somehow? Report me to the Islamic government? She swallows. “Yes,” she says. The driver does not speak for a while, then half turns again and whispers, “So am I.” Janna exhales. She knows there is not one Church building in the whole country. “That’s wonderful. So where do you fellowship?” He shakes his head. “Nowhere is safe. I can’t even tell my family.”

Syria, North Korea and in so many places. There are more Christians being persecuted in the world now than ever before. As you read, ask these questions: What keeps them going? How can I pray for them?

Hebrews 11:36—*But others were tortured, refusing to turn from God in order to be set free. They placed their hope in a better life after the resurrection.*

Full reading: Hebrews 10:32-36 and Hebrews 11:36-38

Now pray as God leads you.

Tuesday 8th November

“I used to be a school teacher,” whispers the Afghan woman. “But now I have to stitch clothes”. “Why?” asks Janna. “When the government found out I had become a Christian, they cancelled my teachers registration.” “But can’t your husband work?” “No! His family has told him that if he leaves his house they will shoot him. Everyone is supposed to be a Muslim.” She leans forward. “But we have found the love of Jesus.”

As we live authentic God-glowing, God-acknowledging, God-speaking, and God-caring lives, read what Peter says about what is normal.

1 Peter 4:12—*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.*

Check out what Jesus himself says: **John 15:18-20**

Wednesday 9th November

As we look through the prism of our comfortableness, what is happening to the kingdom of God? Two weeks ago ABC reported that China's governing Communist Party is set to launch a nationwide crackdown on Christianity. It has already started. Church leaders and their followers have been arrested and imprisoned. Some say there are 100 million Christians in China — that's more than Communist Party members. And they say by 2030 China will have the world's biggest Christian population.

Mark 4:30-32—*“What shall we say the Kingdom of God is like?” asked Jesus. “What parable shall we use to explain it? t is like this. A man takes a mustard seed, the smallest seed in the world, and plants it in the ground. After a while it grows up and becomes the biggest of all plants. It puts out such large branches that the birds come and make their nests in its shade.”*

Can you celebrate, and at the same time ask questions about the kingdom here in Australia?

Pray as God leads you.

Thursday 10th November

Janna's voice drops. “Grant. That's the Church in Peshawar, where we used to worship. A hundred dead, and two hundred injured.” She has just read out the report of the suicide bombers who pulled the pins in the packed Church in Pakistan. My mind struggles: the chaos, the smoke, the screaming, the blood, the flesh, and the last gasps of life. Whole families, “taken out.”

A Chinese believer says, "God says you should love your enemies, if they are hungry give them food to eat if they are thirsty give them water to drink, so we will pray for the non-believers. Another says, "Let the spirit of Jesus move them and conquer them."

Jesus says in **Matthew 5:44**—"But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!"

Further reading: *Sauls can become Pauls.*

Acts 9:1-9 Why does God persevere with such terrible people? Why should he persevere with me?

Pray as God leads you.

Friday 11th November

Two thousand years ago the early Christians were persecuted by Saul. It hasn't stopped. Last month: Indian Christians plan nationwide protest against growing persecution. Iran: security forces abduct Christian converts a fortnight after separate raid on house church.

Acts 9:13—"But Lord," exclaimed Ananias, "I've heard many people talk about the terrible things this man has done to the believers in Jerusalem!?"

How was Ananias feeling? Why? How would you have felt?

Read Acts 9:10-19

Pray for the persecutors and the God resisters who come to your mind.

Saturday 12th November

Acts 4:19-20—*So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard."*

Now read all of Acts 4:16-20. Have you ever felt pressured not to be God's kingdom person?

It was my turn at my writers group in Norwood. So I recite my piece “Hubble Images.” It ends like this: “*My son. Read the scrolls. Take my hand. You are mine. I am The Source. All is ready. So come. My name is ... Forever. Let’s run.*”

There was silence. I hadn’t even directly referred to Jesus, but they all knew. Finally the President spoke up, “Good work Grant, but we do *not* like your word from the sponsor, at the end.” I felt like Peter and John being told to keep their mouths shut. But, like them, I can’t. And I will keep looking for opportunities to drop in the “kingdom hooks”. Later, at supper time, one member found me and spoke of her love for the Lord, and another quietly shared how he is still searching.

How do we see the powerful forces of “the world, the flesh and the devil” in action in our increasingly secularised society? Can we expect things to get tougher for Christians as we seek to speak and support God’s values, and share our experience of God in our lives. Will you be like Peter and Paul?

Pray for boldness and wisdom to share because Jesus said he, and we, are the light of the world. And give thanks that we are privileged to be assistants in the great work of The Holy Spirit.

Keep informed about issues in our society. For example, google Australian Christian Lobby, or Family Voice SA

Sunday 13th November

Psalm 86:12-13—*With all my heart I will praise you, O Lord my God. I will give glory to your name forever, for your love for me is very great. You have rescued me from the depths of death.*

When we are in trouble, can we follow the Psalm writer David’s example and remind ourselves what our God is like? **Read** all of his song, **Psalm 86**. What is our God like? In verse 12 what can we learn from David? How can we use this to pray for our suffering brothers and sisters, and ourselves?

For regular updates and prayer fuel for the persecuted church, Grant recommends you email bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org or you can google, “News Barnabas.”