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***“Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?”*** Psalm 2:1

Mankind is in rebellion to God. Mankind is seeking “independence from our Creator; “liberation” from God; “freedom” from God’s laws.

***“Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.”*** Psalm 2:3

This war against God takes many forms:

## **ISLAMIC PERSECUTION**

Islamic mobs have regularly burnt down churches and murdered Christians in Nigeria and Sudan. In Uganda, hundreds of thousands of Christians were killed under the persecution of Muslim dictator Idi Amin in the 1970’s. In the Sudan, nearly a million people (most of them Christians) have died since 1956 in the ongoing vicious civil war between the Muslim Arab north and the Christian Black south.

Shortly before Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, the government of Kuwait used its oil money to fund a project to buy up all the (subsidised) Bibles in Nigeria and burn them. Christians in Nigeria now point out that it wasn’t long afterwards that the oil wells of Kuwait were burning.

When an Afghan freedom fighter described to me the incredible sufferings that the Soviet invasion had inflicted on his people in Afghanistan - the millions of landmines, butterfly bombs, poison gas, and booby trapped toys - I expressed my deep sorrow and sympathy. “No”, he shook his head. “You must not feel sorry for us. We greatly persecuted Christianity in Afghanistan. In fact we bulldozed down the last protestant Church in Kabul just one month before the Russians invaded on Christmas 1979. God is judging us for disputing with the people of The Book.”

## COMMUNIST PERSECUTION

I have seen literally hundreds of burnt down churches, and have ministered to the survivors of many massacres in Mozambique and Angola. Contrary to popular perceptions that communism is dead, Christians continue to suffer restrictions, harassment, imprisonments and martyrdom in China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Serbia and other marxist controlled lands. Communist revolutionaries continue to murder thousands in Peru, Columbia, the Philippines and South Africa.

## HUMANIST PERSECUTION

And even in the so-called "Christian" West one finds a war raging - against God and His standards. In American public schools the Bible has been banned, prayer made illegal and the scientific evidence for creation outlawed. Christian schools and home schoolers in several states have been prosecuted. Hollywood promotes the taking of the Lord's Name in vain in most films, and regularly produces blatantly blasphemous films. And tens of thousands of Christians have been arrested for peacefully protesting the murder of unborn babies at abortion clinics.

On 26 March 1986, Joan Andrews walked into an abortion clinic in Pensacola and disconnected the plug on a suction machine. Despite the facts that she did not break in (the door was open), that she did not damage any property, and neither did she resist arrest, Joan Andrews was sentenced to five years in a maximum security prison (with leave to appeal denied) - for seeking to save babies from abortion!

In a separate case, on the same day that Joan was sentenced to 5 years, and in the same courtroom, the same Judge Anderson sentenced a previously convicted felon to four years (with time off for good behaviour) for being an accomplice to murder! In Holland not only is abortion, pornography, drug taking, euthanasia and homosexual marriages legal, it is now illegal for Christians to teach that homosexuality is wrong!

*'The people plot a vain thing, the kings of the earth take council together, against the Lord and against His anointed...' Psalm 2:2*

## MEET THE PERSECUTORS

Many of us may find it hard to believe that such things actually happen, that there are people

who hate God and deliberately persecute His people. Let me introduce you to some persecutors whom I have met:

### ZIMBABWE

It was while preaching at a Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) base that I was confronted by a young soldier who shouted: *“Mugabe is my god! ‘A War of Liberation’ is my bible! ZANU is my church! And communism is my religion! We are the masters of our own destinies!”*

In response I pointed out to the soldiers that had gathered around us:

*“You know that in your book a man speaks - but in the Bible God speaks. Robert Mugabe is but a man - but Jesus... He is God. Mugabe must one day die - But Jesus will never die. He is the One who will judge all men.*

“ZANU is a political party - but the Church is part of God’s Kingdom. Political parties rise and fall - but the Kingdom of God lasts forever. Politics change. ZANU is popular, here, with you, now - but in the future... who knows? Once UNITA was considered your comrades - but not any more. Once ZAPU was popular - but not now. Why put all your trust in temporary, changing politics - rather trust in God... His Kingdom will never be defeated.

“Communism is man seeking to change his society - but Christianity is God reaching down and changing people. Communism doesn’t give you eternal life. Marx cannot forgive sins. Lenin cannot lead you to Heaven. Turn instead to Jesus - He alone can forgive sins, give us eternal life and lead us to God. Do not waste your life serving man-made politics. Use your life profitably and serve God.”

Some of the soldiers showed great interest but the one who had made the initial statement sulked off and radioed headquarters. Unknown to us, while we continued for another hour, speaking to them about the Lord and giving Gospels to all in the camp, an ambush was set up for us on the road that we had to return on and some CIO Secret Police rushed over to arrest us.

We were separated and taken to their headquarters, where we were each interrogated individually. Derek and I soon took the opportunity to share our testimonies and the Gospel with our interrogators. Before long we were each surrounded by interested CIO interrogators, eagerly asking us questions concerning Christ. By the time we were released most of them had asked for and received Bibles.

### ZAMBIA

During my imprisonment in Zambia in 1987 our Bibles were confiscated. It was during that time of being led blindfolded, barefoot and in chains, and later incarcerated in the overcrowded Lusaka Central Prison that I came to appreciate how important Bible memorisation is. During the daily preaching and counselling opportunities we were dependent on the Word of God stored in our hearts and minds. Nevertheless, at each of my six interrogation sessions I requested that our Bibles be returned.

On one occasion a Special Branch interrogator pulled out a little red book and handed it to me. *"This is my bible,"*

he said.

*"This is the only bible you need here."*

Upon examining it I saw that it was an English translation of Mao Tse Tung's Red Book. I gave it back to him.

*"Mao cannot forgive your sins,"*

I replied.

*"Neither can Marxism lead anyone to heaven."*

### MOZAMBIQUE

In 1989, after being captured in Mozambique by communist forces and flown by Soviet pilots to Machava Security Prison, I was escorted into an interrogation room. *"I am the devil!"* declared the SNASP investigator by way of introduction.

*"Not only am I a Leninist, I am a Stalinist. I studied three years in Czechoslovakia!"*

*"Well, I am a Christian,"* was my reply. *"I don't like Christians,"* was his response.

The walls of each of the solitary confinement cells our team was imprisoned in bore eloquent testimony to the fact that he didn't like Christians. The walls of our cells were covered in Christian messages scratched on with finger nails and little pieces of stone:

*"Please God help me", "Jesus is my Lord and Saviour", "I haven't eaten for 38 days", "I haven't seen the sun in 134 days"*

*"God is my refuge"*

, many verses, some crosses and fish symbols. We were clearly not the first Christians imprisoned in those cells.

### ANGOLA

During ministry into Marxist Angola I have met survivors of SWAPO concentration camps and MPLA prisons. Each one related the horrific conditions and tortures which they had experienced. Some told how they had pleaded with their guards to get it over with and just kill them. In response their guards mocked them: *"We don't want to kill you and send you to heaven with God! No! We want you to curse Christ, and come to hell with us - for all eternity!"*

And that confirms my own conclusions on this subject. The purpose of persecution is not to kill Christians. Satan receives no benefit from sending believers to meet their Lord in heaven. The purpose of persecution is to intimidate Christians into compromise. It's to persuade Christians to give in to pressure, give up and lose the joy of our salvation - to weaken and neutralise the Church.

***"Do not fear those who can kill the body and after that can do no more... Fear God who can destroy both body and soul in Hell."*** Luke 12:4,5