

Christ Builds His Church

Scripture Reading — Matthew 16:13-20

"On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Matthew 16:18 —

We need to pray every day for Christians who are persecuted for their faith. The Voice of the Martyrs magazine records the story of a Christian pastor in an Islamic country who was pulled from a worship service in 1999 and put into underground solitary confinement. His cell was only five feet high and three feet square. According to the article, "There was a small window in the door so the guards could watch the prisoners--or so the prisoners could preach to the guards." And preach he did. During the 15 days of his imprisonment, that pastor and another Christian in a nearby cell led 10 inmates and several guards to faith in Jesus.

Modern testimonies of the persecuted church read like stories from the book of Acts. They are stark reminders of Jesus' promise to build his church. What else could explain the church's survival and growth throughout 20 centuries? How else could believers care about others' salvation in the face of hell's fury?

The risen Lord Jesus is alive and building his church. Those of us who can worship him freely can see this too. Who else can change the heart of a prodigal child? Or give joy to a believer in the face of death? Or set up so many ministries that do so much good?

"I will build my church," says Jesus. With that hope let us bear witness that he is "the Son of the living God."

Prayer

Dear Jesus, we know you are at work building your church. Strengthen your people everywhere today to give faithful testimony about you in all they do and say. In your name, Amen.

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