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Beheadings and Our Hearts



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A pregnant woman in Sudan is sentenced to death for converting to Christianity. Ultimately, she was saved from the executioner, as countless followers of Jesus prayed and mounted a campaign encouraging diplomatic efforts, but others, unknown to all but a few and God, die. Christians in many places are suffering unspeakable horrors. Even before the videos of beheadings, Christians were claiming that ISIS had beheaded other Christians, even children. Countless other Christians live as second class citizens in the very places where the Christian faith first took root and flourished. A recent Pew Foundation study asserts that the most persecuted group in the world today are Christians, and persecution is not limited to one or two regions or even one continent or from one religion. (I have not read the study myself, only quotations). Some countries that decry the violence against Christians as being contrary to their religion still do not allow Christians to worship in their country.

We find ourselves nauseated and confused by the news reports, and at best, many of us simply want to turn away to the beauty that God has lavished upon us in this world. It is too easy simply to hate or even ignore those who are committing such evil. Yet, if Jesus were to tell the story of the "Good Samaritan" today, who would he pick as the hated neighbor? If we are still to love our enemies, who would that be? What does love for our neighbor really mean?

Love for our neighbor does not mean feeling "warm and fuzzy" toward everyone as our cultural definition of love would have us think. Neither does it mean an uncritical acceptance of all behaviour, and especially criminal behaviour, simply because "that is their way." We recognize that we live in a fallen world that is NOT what God meant it to be or wants it to be, including our own culture.

Love in the Biblical sense is a commitment to acting in the best interest of the other. Part of that means protecting those who cannot protect themselves. I still do not know how to reconcile that with Jesus' teaching of non-violence, but we have seen an amazing demonstration of the power of non-violent intervention in the saving of the Sudanese woman. What was invisible was the extreme power of prayer.

Do we pray for our enemies? I need to more! A wise woman responding to one of my presentations said, "When we pray for someone, they can no longer be our enemy." I believe it was Father Berrigan, who said, "We must be as committed to doing good as the evil are to doing evil." Who is most committed today?

These are the two months when we have a special opportunity to re-commit ourselves to the work of God around the world. God has invited International Ministries into some remarkable opportunities to partner with God and what God is doing through his people around the world. Jeanine and I are deeply blessed to have been a part of International Ministries for these many years. I am up to 38

continuous years, and I cannot express how grateful I am for the opportunities God has given me.

Meanwhile, the lives of Jeanine and Walt have been extremely hectic, but we did take time out between meetings in Australia for a wonderful vacation with friends. But none of the urgent tasks such as thanking each one of you got completed during that rest. However, please, please do not think that we are not hugely grateful for your support. Also, we are grappling with the decision of where to live, as our eldest daughter moved to Germany. Please pray for that decision and its implementation!

Serving Christ with you, Walt and Jeanine White

