

Pain for Him; Gain for Them

By Jim Elliff



Muslim extremists murdered Ayub's grandmother on one of the islands of Indonesia. We stayed in the home of this warmhearted Christian leader a few years ago. He serves as an elder for the church meeting in a home nearby. We loved this brother and his wife immediately and shared some really happy moments together in Christ.

But, Ayub's life was a troubled one at first. When he was a teenage boy, as a consequence of declared Jihad, Muslim zealots insisted that everyone on his island convert to Islam or face severe consequences. His family claimed to be Christian. For his grandmother, who was killed by the Muslims at that time, this was an accurate claim. It was 2002.

Ayub was abducted by the Muslim antagonists at age 17, and was taken to a training center where he was forced to study the Koran and Arabic and was threatened that his parents would be killed if he tried to leave. Finally, as he likes to say it, "The Lord made a way for him to escape" from his captors.

But what about his parents? They also claimed to be Christian. He found that they left the small island after the murder and his abduction. But, to Ayub's dismay they returned later and converted to the Islamic religion in order to do so. Ayub's struggles led him to a true saving knowledge of Christ. More than merely identifying on paper as a Christian (all Indonesians now have to officially identify their religious connections), he is a vibrant young married believer, serving the cause of Christ with all his heart on the islands of Indonesia where more Muslims live than in any other country in the world.

Serving Christ Wasn't Meant To Be Easy

Let's face it, being nominal is a breeze, but standing strong as a true believer can be very costly. Admittedly, this is all the more so where religions clash or atheistic philosophies contend. But it is so for all Christians. "All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," Paul declared (2 Timothy 3:12). One has to surmise that the reason we

see less of this in the West is because we are not so godly. Only two things raise the level of persecution: outside forces philosophically against us, or our own godliness which contrasts so starkly with the world. And the persecution against us can cause collateral damage to family members and close friends because of the convictions we hold.

As we taught pastors, evangelists, and indigenous missionaries in Indonesia, we deeply enjoyed the smiling Christians we met. As a rule, Indonesians have such pleasant personalities. But to the degree they stand for Christ, especially in some of the more difficult areas, they will and have experienced the tensions of being in a foreign land — that is, the tensions of having a citizenship in heaven while living in the world. As we met with believers in a few churches gathered in homes and while speaking to several hundred college students about Christ, we were aware that following Christ has consequences.

Perhaps we will not be murdered as this grandmother was, but we will face true consequences nonetheless. And then again, maybe we will be murdered. The question that always plagues me is this: Are the professing Christians I know ready for this? Do we understand?

Will Things Get Worse?

The answer to the above question is, without equivocation, "yes." Almost all of us who watch what is happening in the world can feel the mammoth plates shifting on the earth, as religions rub violently against each other and unabashed ungodliness presses against our once widely-held notions. Things will change. We all feel it.

The work goes on through faithful workers all over the world, while we sip our coffee or watch yet another television program. But the principles don't change. Our time may come before we know it and we must be prepared. We can learn from brothers and sisters where resistance to their cherished beliefs takes a more defiant stance.