

FINAL DECLARATION

WORLD SUMMIT IN DEFENSE OF PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Washington, DC, USA

May 10 – 13, 2017

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial ... as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you for the Spirit of God rests upon you ...” (1 Peter 4:12-14).

OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST came from Heaven to earth to save us through His death on the cross. The willing sacrifice of blood shed by the Savior of the world to cover human sin, and His miraculous resurrection 2,000 years ago to bring new life, gave birth to the beloved church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

DOWN THROUGH THE CENTURIES His church, made up of redeemed men, women, and children who have put their faith and trust in Him alone, has encountered conflict, oppression, brutality and even death at the hands of those who reject the Only-Begotten Son of God Jesus Christ and are hostile to His Gospel. Yet the purpose of the Church is to be the light of truth in the midst of a corrupt world.

THIS GLORIOUS MESSAGE BREAKS THROUGH the darkness and calls all people to repent of sin and turn to Christ, accept God’s forgiveness, receive the salvation that comes by the grace of God through faith in Him alone, live in obedience to Christ, and serve Him as Master and Lord. Historically, this powerful testimony for Christ has often led to persecution of His people.

JESUS WARNED HIS DISCIPLES, *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first ... If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you ...” (John 15:18, 20).* In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, *“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11-12).*

STUDYING THE HOLY WORD we see the evidence that persecution for the name of Jesus Christ strengthens and grows His church. Persecution also leads others, sometimes even persecutors, to salvation, adding to the church and filling God’s eternal home with souls won for His kingdom. This is clearly the hope of the church triumphant; for Christ promised, *“... I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).*

THE APOSTLE PAUL, WHO BEFORE HIS CONVERSION HAD PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS, came to experience perhaps more than any other apostle, the comfort of knowing Christ’s forgiveness and the forgiveness of those who became his brothers and sisters in the

faith. He wrote, *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).*

THE SCRIPTURES TELL CHRISTIANS TO EXPECT SUFFERING because of His name. *“... all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).* *“For Your sake we are killed all day long ... Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:36-37).* The Bible promises that Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us (*Hebrews 13:5*).

THE ATROCITIES BEING COMMITTED AGAINST CHRISTIANS around the world in the 21st century have brought us together in Washington, DC. ***The World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians*** at its heart is to embrace “the household of faith” suffering for Christ’s sake. Assembled here from more than 130 countries with various church backgrounds, we are joined by our commitment to Jesus Christ and His Word to share our deep concern for the persecuted. We ask for God to bolster our faith through prayer and praise; thanking Him that their testimonies for Christ will be used to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth and bring glory to Him.

WE HAVE BEEN PROFOUNDLY MOVED BY TESTIMONIES from those who have lived under constant threats of persecution and, in many instances, bear its scars. Their examples of courage and faith have inspired and challenged those of us who live in less restricted societies.

IN WESTERN NATIONS, CHRISTIANS NOW EXPERIENCE marginalization, ridicule, and threats to religious liberty. In other places in the world, Christians face torture, mass executions, and attempts to extinguish historic Christian churches. In the catastrophes of the Middle East and North Africa, Christians and their families have been forced to flee their homelands. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Their suffering is our cause. With resolve may we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be equipped as Paul to say, *“... I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus” (Galatians 6:17).*

AS CHRIST’S FOLLOWERS WE ARE COMMANDED TO PRAY, encourage and support our fellow believers. We must not sit back and passively refuse to act on their behalf. *“Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves in the body” (Hebrews 13:3).* When Peter was unjustly imprisoned for preaching Christ, the church took hold of the most powerful weapon in the believer’s arsenal—they called on the God of Heaven. And as Christians were praying, Peter knocked on their door. He had been freed in answer to fervent prayer.

LET US DECLARE OUR ALLEGIANCE with all who suffer for Christ’s name and pledge to make the following commitments:

WE PLEDGE TO PROMOTE awareness of persecuted Christians worldwide and work to help in their hour of need.

WE PLEDGE TO PRAY unceasingly, urging other believers throughout the world to pray for those being persecuted, that the whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless. *(1 Thessalonians 5:17, 23-24)*

WE PLEDGE TO PROVIDE practical assistance, whenever possible, to the persecuted church. *(Philippians 2:4)*

WE PLEDGE TO WORK with individuals, organizations, and government agencies encouraging them to act as advocates on behalf of the persecuted because of their faith in Christ Jesus. *(Proverbs 31:8-9)*

WE PLEDGE TO FOLLOW the biblical mandate to comfort and edify one another so that we exemplify Christ's love and transforming power, even in the midst of hardship *(1 Thessalonians 5:11)*.

WE PLEDGE TO STRENGTHEN the worldwide witness of the church around the world through biblical proclamation-evangelism, and to do so boldly, unapologetically, and without compromise *(Mark 16:15; Romans 1:16)*.

Persecution is increasing, but the church's witness to the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ will never be extinguished. We pray for our fellow Christian believers, wherever they may be found. We claim the Lordship of Christ and watch for that day when He will return and reign as King of Kings forever, and we pray for that promised day when, as that cherished hymn of the faith declares, "the great church victorious shall be the church at rest."

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day ..." (Ephesians 6:12-13).

END

All Scripture references taken from the King James Version, New King James Version, or New International Version.