

VOICE OF THE MARTYRS AUSTRALIA PRESENTS



THE FRONT LINE

STORIES OF CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION



Voice^{of}_{the} Martyrs

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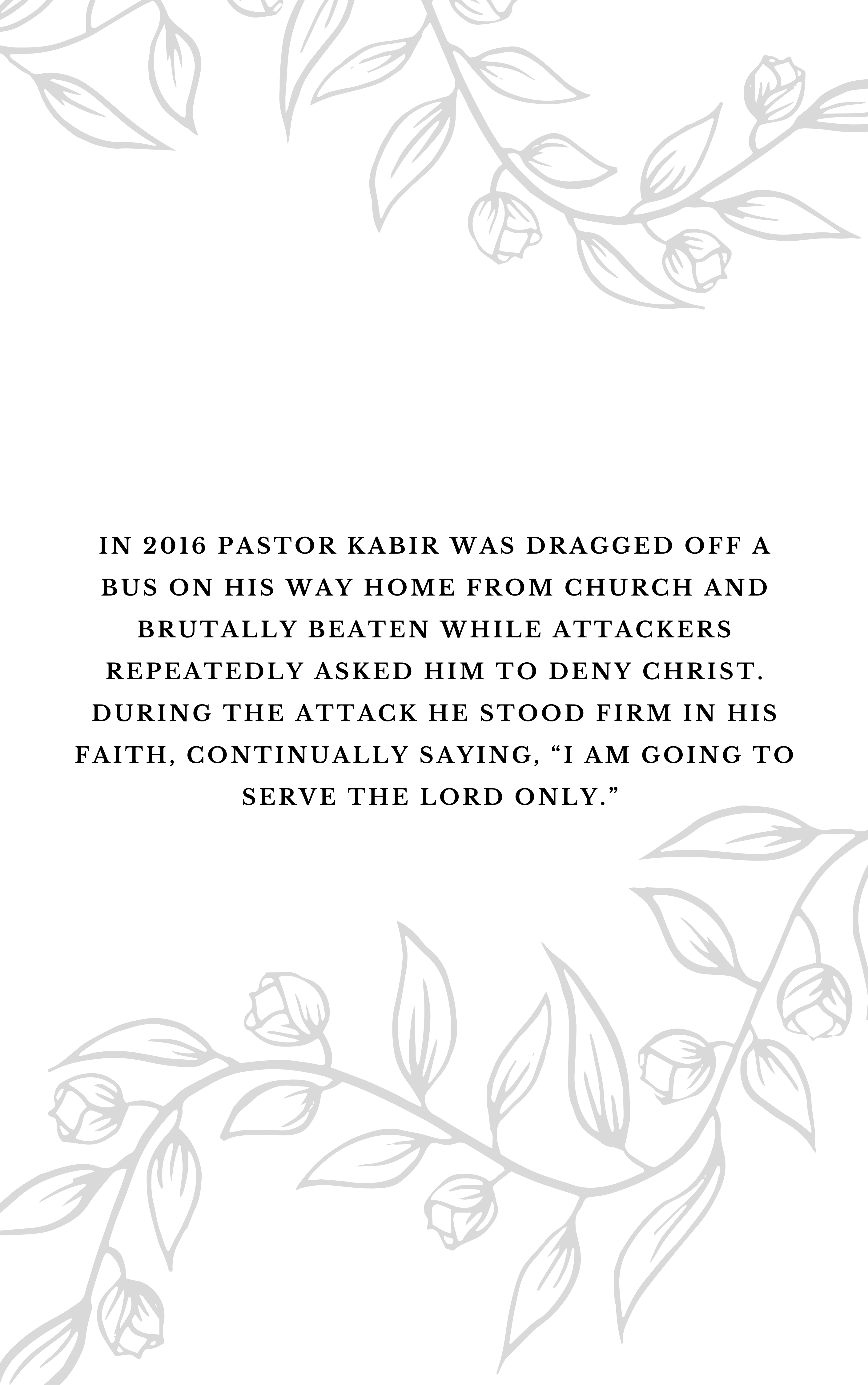
VOICE OF THE MARTYRS



THE FRONT LINE

CHAPTER ONE

**BEATEN BODY,
BOLD WITNESS**



**IN 2016 PASTOR KABIR WAS DRAGGED OFF A
BUS ON HIS WAY HOME FROM CHURCH AND
BRUTALLY BEATEN WHILE ATTACKERS
REPEATEDLY ASKED HIM TO DENY CHRIST.
DURING THE ATTACK HE STOOD FIRM IN HIS
FAITH, CONTINUALLY SAYING, “I AM GOING TO
SERVE THE LORD ONLY.”**

CHAPTER ONE

Pastor Kabir finished leading a prayer service at Saviour's Church in the heart of one of India's slums. He then left his congregation of 40 believers at around 9pm and boarded a bus to travel home to his wife and their two daughters, just as he did every Sunday evening.

This time, however, four men followed the young pastor. The men, all members of a youth militia called Hindu Yuva Vahini, stopped the bus 5km from Kabir's home, dragged him off and kidnapped him.

They took him to an empty building, where they planned to force him to deny Jesus on video. This is a practice of many Hindu nationalist groups who seek to forcibly reconvert people who leave Hinduism.

The men surrounded the pastor, brutally kicking and punching him for 15 minutes. One of them repeatedly hit him on the head with the handle of a knife, and with each blow Kabir pleaded with God to spare his life, pledging to serve Him more zealously if he survived.

As the pastor lay on the floor bleeding, one of his attackers began to record the beating with his smartphone. Another man ordered Kabir to say that he would no longer follow Jesus and that he would return to Hinduism and worship its idols again. "I am going to serve the Lord only," Kabir replied. "I am not going to worship idols. I am going to serve Jesus."

CHAPTER ONE

The men again beat the pastor and demanded that he deny Christ for the video but he refused. The pattern of demands, refusals and beatings continued for 90 minutes, until the men finally grew tired and frustrated with Kabir's stubbornness.

"You are converting everybody to Christianity here. Tomorrow, if I see you again holding a Bible, I will kill you."

They then burned Kabir's Bible and let him go. One of the attackers put Kabir on his motorcycle, took him about a kilometre away and told him to get off the bike. Disoriented, bleeding and in severe pain, Kabir called a friend to pick him up and take him home.

When Kabir returned home hours later, his wife and daughters were shocked to see him bloodied and bruised.

In that moment, despite the pain from the beating, Kabir decided he wouldn't let the attack stop him from serving the Lord.

"God has spared my life, so I will forgive the attackers and not report them," Kabir thought. "I will double the work I am presently doing for the Lord."

Still in pain the next morning, Kabir went to hospital discovering he had a ruptured eardrum in his left ear, a tear in his right ear and a fractured skull. He would need multiple surgeries.

CHAPTER ONE

“I felt like my ears were gone,” he said. “There was no sound and my head was very heavy.”

As Kabir recovered from his injuries, a friend discovered that the attackers had posted a video of the incident on a closed Hindu Yuva Vahini Facebook page. The video had been edited to make it appear that Kabir had reconverted to Hinduism.

A pastors’ network reported the video to authorities and the four men were arrested.

“I am praying for them every day,” Kabir said, “that they should be saved, come to church and accept Christ. If I see them, I will go and tell them, ‘God loves you and I am praying for you.’”

Kabir has pastored some of India’s poorest Christians for 12 years, and never experienced persecution before this attack. Now, having stood boldly for Christ he is ready to do more for God’s kingdom.

“I have grown in my faith,” he said a month after the attack.

“If it happens again in the future, I am not scared. Whatever God wants, let Him do. If I am here, I will keep doing the work. If I die, I go to His kingdom.”

CHAPTER ONE

Since then, his church has grown to 60 members, his outreach ministry has doubled and he now ministers in two villages. Voice of the Martyrs gave him a bicycle to help him keep up with his growing ministry.

Like Kabir, his wife Ishita knows that God will be with her family if they face more persecution.

“I am not scared because God has told us that He is always with us and He is going to protect us.”

The couple’s daughters also have gained a new perspective on their faith since the attack.

“Whatever happens, God is there; He will protect us,” said 15-year-old Vanya. “I am not going to put my faith down. I am happy that Dad is safe.”

“I am happy with my father’s faith,” added 13-year-old Myra. “I want my father to do more work. We are not going to lose our faith. We are going to serve the Lord in the future.”

VOM was also able to help pay for Kabir’s medical care and while surgery restored his left ear, doctors were unable to repair the damage to his right ear and he now requires a hearing aid. Kabir asks that Christians pray for his family and for his continued healing. He also requests prayer for his attackers and for the very poor people whom he serves.

CHAPTER ONE

Kabir is committed to pastoring and serving the poor, following Christ's example.

"In the Christian life there is persecution," Kabir said. "Now God has allowed me to taste it."






A painting depicting a man in a red polo shirt looking down with a somber expression. Behind him, another person in a white coat stands with their hands on their hips. The scene is set against a light, textured background.


THE FRONT LINE

CHAPTER TWO

CALLED BEFORE JUDGES



**IN MATTHEW 10, JESUS TELLS HIS FOLLOWERS
NOT TO WORRY WHEN THEY ARE CALLED
BEFORE AUTHORITIES TO EXPLAIN THEIR
FAITH. BASSAM, A BELIEVER LIVING IN THE
ARABIAN PENINSULA, HAS HEEDED THIS
ADMONITION MANY TIMES WHEN
CONFRONTED BY BOSSES, JUDGES AND ANGRY
FAMILY MEMBERS.**



CHAPTER TWO

The year 2013 was a turning point in Bassam's faith. Though he had come to know Jesus Christ eight years earlier, he had kept quiet about it, meeting privately with the man who had led him to Christ and worshipping at the only Christian fellowship in the area when he was able. "He was like most Muslim background believers in our area," said Surur, a VOM-supported evangelist. "[They] keep to themselves and do not share their faith."

Then, one day, Bassam came to Surur with an announcement. "I've been spiritually sleeping all these years," he told his mentor, "and I can no longer keep my faith in Christ to myself. I feel strongly compelled to tell everyone about the only true God, Jesus."

That is when Bassam's walk of suffering began.

First, his wife rejected him, telling everyone in her family that she was married to an unclean man. Since Bassam worked for the police, she also made sure his fellow police officers knew they were working with an 'infidel.'

After being summoned to headquarters while at work, Bassam waited nervously for a meeting with the police commander, unsure of what he would say. While most people in his country are more concerned about keeping up appearances than making a deep commitment to Islam, having an openly Christian man on the police force would be problematic. Bassam's commander took a conciliatory approach.

CHAPTER TWO

“We hear you have been deceived about a false religion,” he said. “You should come back to Islam.” But Bassam, though respectful and deferential, did not back down. “No, Jesus is the true God,” he said, “and I will follow Him.” Frustrated, the commander ended the conversation with a warning for Bassam to “keep his mouth shut,” agreeing that he could believe as he wished as long as he didn’t share his faith at work.

Bassam’s wife, however, would not be appeased. She and her family pressured his supervisors at work to discipline him for continuing to openly profess his faith. Bassam’s bosses were happy to oblige, scheduling him for multiple shifts in a row and summoning him to meetings in order to threaten him. “At work, it became totally clear that Bassam had rejected Islam and embraced the Christian faith,” Surur said.

Bassam continued to share his faith with his family, too, and they grew angrier each time he did. His wife kicked him out of their apartment and limited his access to their daughters. Although she has completely rejected him, she will not divorce him because she wants access to his salary and government benefits. She even made arrangements with his employer to have most of Bassam’s salary given to her.

CHAPTER TWO

Bassam's brothers-in-law beat him regularly. He has been admitted to the hospital multiple times with broken ribs, a permanently damaged knee, bruises and bleeding. "The beatings have become an everyday thing," Surur said.

While his brothers-in-law prefer using their fists, Bassam's wife uses the courts. She has filed complaints several times, accusing him of blasphemy against Islam, Mohammed and the Koran. When called before judges, Bassam simply tells them the truth, that he believes in Jesus. "That is OK," they say. "Muslims believe Jesus is a prophet, too." Then Bassam tells them, "No, I believe in the Jesus who is God who became human."

As punishment, the judges have thrown him in jail for a few nights for his 'apostasy' before releasing him. Most of them are Muslim in name only and aren't concerned about strict enforcement of Islamic law, or Sharia. "There are many atheists here," Surur explained.

Still, in the culture of Bassam's country, his relatives could kill him as an apostate and receive a maximum penalty of only two years in prison, if they went to prison at all. Things would become more complicated, though, if Bassam's conversion to Christianity were made public; Islamists from throughout the region would pressure both his family and the government to take action against him.

CHAPTER TWO

Over time, Bassam has learned to be truthful but wise when testifying in court, trusting in the Holy Spirit's inspiration. He avoids responding to questions about whether he is still a Muslim, instead talking about his faith in Jesus as his Saviour. The judges often tell him to keep it to himself.

Like the disciples in the Book of Acts, however, Bassam cannot keep quiet. He continued to share Christ with his father even after his father had disowned him for becoming a Christian. And when his father was hospitalised in October 2019, Bassam explained the Gospel to his male relatives who came to visit in the hospital room.

Though he received another beating for his boldness, one of his sisters later sent him a message asking for a Bible. Since then, she and one of their brothers have secretly come to faith. One of his daughters has placed her faith in Christ, even though Bassam is rarely allowed to speak with his two daughters.

Several months ago, Bassam was collecting tin cans along a roadside for extra income when a car swerved to a stop beside him. One of his wife's brothers jumped out and began to beat him, breaking a tooth and bloodying his head before bystanders could intervene. His brother-in-law was arrested, but Bassam refused to press charges. Instead, Bassam told him, "I love you. My Lord tells me to forgive."

CHAPTER TWO

His response prompted another sister to enquire about Christianity. “Bassam’s boldness is bearing fruit,” Surur said. “He has become an inspiration and encouragement to the old and the new believers in our area.”

Despite ongoing persecution, Bassam continues to distribute Bibles and copies of the JESUS film to people on the street. “Bassam shares his faith all the time,” Surur said, “knowing that every day could be his last on earth.”

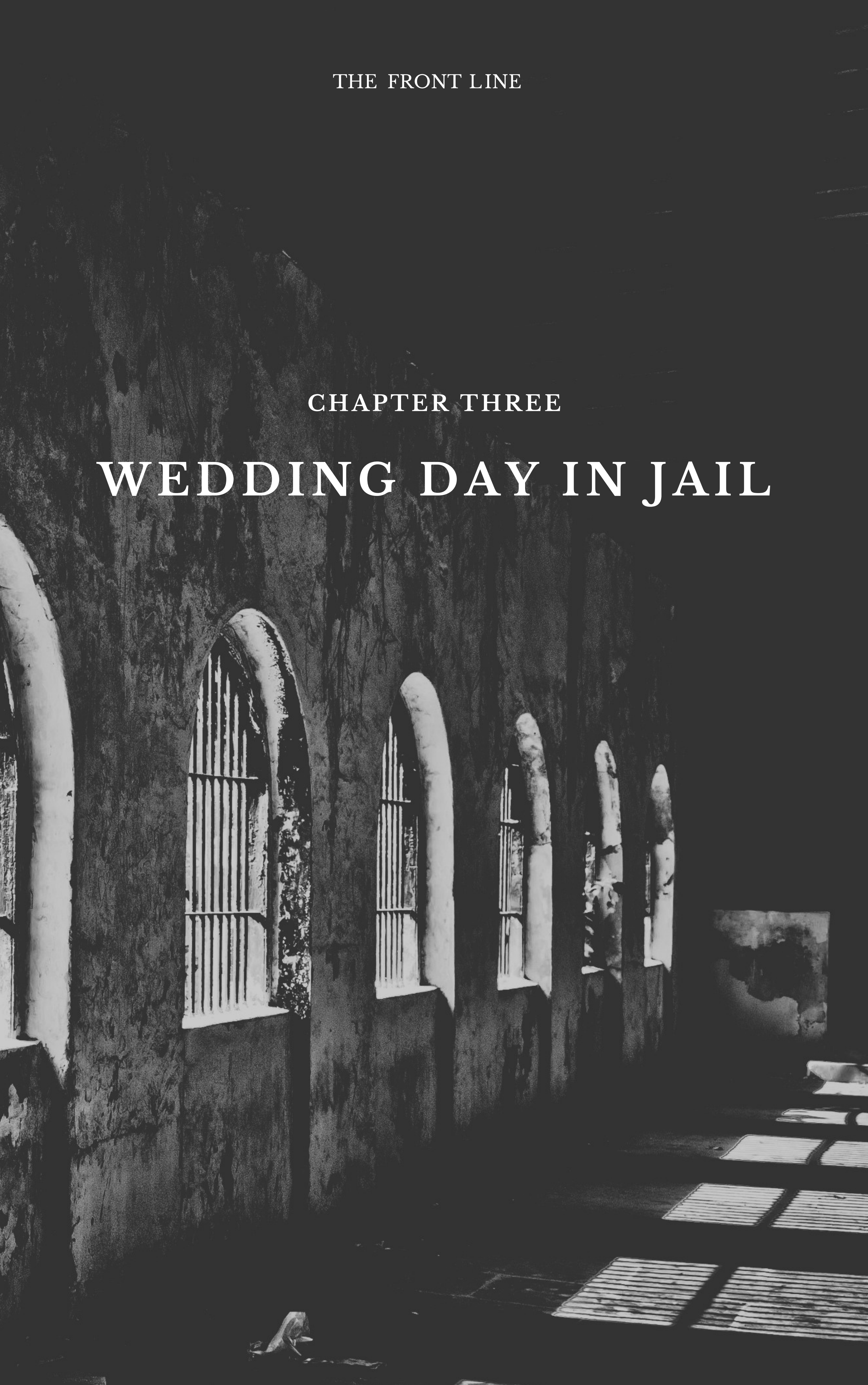




THE FRONT LINE

CHAPTER THREE

WEDDING DAY IN JAIL



**CHRISTIAN COUPLE, RABISH AND SUMMANDI
SET A WEDDING DATE WITH VILLAGE
OFFICIALS AND EAGERLY ANTICIPATED THEIR
BIG DAY. THEY PLANNED TO MARRY ON 30 MAY
2018, BUT IT SOON BECAME APPARENT THAT
THE VILLAGE WAS NOT WILLING TO HOST A
CHRISTIAN WEDDING.**

CHAPTER THREE

Not long after setting the date, a member of the village planning committee asked Rabish about the religious tradition in which he and Summandi would be getting married. Rabish was a new Christian and many in the village practised a mix of Hinduism and animism. Rabish replied that they would be married as Christians.

Three days later, when the couple asked Summandi's father for permission to marry, he grew angry. Although his wife and children were Christians, he remained Hindu. He threatened Rabish and let them know that he strongly disapproved of their Christian marriage.

Soon the couple started hearing rumours of a planned attack on them. "I got the news from a villager and other outside people that they were planning to kill us on our marriage day," Rabish said. On 28 May, he and Summandi went to the police station to inform them of the plot and request protection. But upon arrival at the police station, they were both arrested.

The next day, their pastor Subarshan and an elder from their church, a woman named Neelam, went to the police station to try to secure their release. They too, however, were arrested.

CHAPTER THREE

Summandi's relatives had falsely accused the four believers of beating Summandi's 60-year-old father with a bamboo stick for refusing to convert to Christianity, so authorities charged them under Jharkhand state's anti-conversion laws. States throughout India are adopting anti-conversion laws meant to protect the country's Hindu identity.

"The police officer said it is only happening because I had decided to marry according to Christian rules," Rabish said. "If we didn't marry according to Christian tradition, then nothing would have happened."

After two weeks behind bars in individual cells, the men were moved into a larger cell with other men, and the women were moved to an all-female cell. "I spent my time in prayer only," Summandi recalled of her time there.

More than 80 other prisoners were in their cell, so she and Neelam had an ever-present audience with whom to share the Gospel. "Some of them had a positive attitude and some had a negative attitude," Summandi said.

Six weeks later, the four Christians were anonymously bailed and released on the same day. A group of pastors and Christian lawyers has since handled their court case.

CHAPTER THREE

Following their release, Rabish and Summandi revised their wedding plans. They were quietly married in court on 4 October and had a church ceremony on 9 November with 40 people from their church.

While they didn't fear retaliation for their decision to marry as Christians, the couple had no desire to invite additional trouble.

They told their mothers about their wedding but not their fathers, and few villagers were aware of their marriage. Summandi said. "In our village, it is a rule that when you have a wedding you have to conduct a party or reception [with the village], and we have not done that."

Christians in the village have faced ongoing persecution since 2010. Villagers will not sell groceries or land to Christians, nor allow them to draw water from their well. Angry villagers have also attacked church gatherings and destroyed a home where Christians meet.

Today, Pastor Subarshan continues to actively serve the community and share the Gospel, despite persecution. Neelam and other women in the village have started a sewing centre near her home.

CHAPTER THREE

Rabish and Summandi have moved to a new city, where Rabish has started a house church. When they visit their home village, they still face opposition from those who remain angry at them.

The legal case against them was almost concluded just before the COVID-19 outbreak, and they're hoping to soon be declared not guilty by the courts.


Whatever the outcome, they know they have each other and that God will always be with them.






THE FRONT LINE

CHAPTER FOUR
LEFT FOR DEAD



“WHY DID YOU COME TO THIS VILLAGE TO SHARE ABOUT JESUS?” THE MEN SHOUTED. “WE ARE A HINDU VILLAGE, AND WE DON’T WANT TO BECOME CHRISTIAN. WE DON’T WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN.” DISCOURAGED BY THE VILLAGERS’ REACTION, SUTA TURNED AWAY AND BEGAN THE 11 KILOMETRE WALK BACK TO HIS HOME VILLAGE.



CHAPTER FOUR

God's leading had seemed clear to the 32-year-old Indian pastor from Rajasthan state as he had prayed the previous day. He had been convicted that he was too comfortable leading the small congregation in his own village. The impression was so distinct that it was like an audible voice. "You are working in your own village, but who will tell the people in the surrounding villages about Jesus?"

During prayer, Suta had felt led to one particular village. So the very next day, he gathered some Gospel tracts and walked to the village. He began

sharing his testimony with anyone who would listen, telling them how he had come to faith in Jesus after growing up Hindu.

The villagers reacted immediately. Several men affiliated with a Hindu fundamentalist group confronted Suta and told him to leave the village. "Don't come here again," they threatened.

After returning home, Suta puzzled over how he could have misunderstood God's will. He kept asking the Lord, "Why are they telling me not to come into the village, when You told me to go?"

CHAPTER FOUR

Suta soon realised he had given up too easily. “Again, I took courage, and I took literature and I went and took the Gospel to that village,” he said.

He knew some of the villagers would be angry, but he was not afraid. “I thought it was my responsibility to preach the Gospel,” he said. “I live for the Christ, I will die for the Christ. I was ready for whatever they would do.”

It was approaching evening when Suta reached the village the second time. He walked from house to house, passing out tracts and telling people about Jesus. Many of the villagers were drinking, celebrating a village couple’s engagement.

After only a short time, Suta was confronted by the same men who had harassed him earlier. This time the group of 20 men carried sticks and rocks.

The men began to beat Suta. When some of the villagers asked why they were beating him, they said, “We told him already not to come and preach, but again he came. He disobeyed us.”

The last thing Suta remembers before he lost consciousness was one of the men shouting, “Don’t ever put your legs in our village again!”

CHAPTER FOUR

Eventually, the Hindu fundamentalists carried Suta's bloodied, apparently lifeless body to a three metre cavity in the ground near the road and tossed him inside.

One of the group's leaders, Raji, then headed home to share the evening meal with his family. As the village's RSS informant (a Hindu nationalist group), Raji was paid to inform Hindu radical leaders about any Christian activity in his village.

At dinner, Raji's wife asked him why he wasn't eating. "I have persecuted an innocent man," he told her. "We have beaten him seriously, and we threw him in a ditch. I have never felt so guilty in my life. He was innocent, and we have beaten him."

Raji's wife began to worry that the family might be harmed by Suta's God because of her husband's actions. She and Raji began to bicker, as she urged him to get Suta out of the ditch.

In the middle of the night, about five hours after being thrown into the hole, Suta woke up. Unable to walk, he lay there calling for water to relieve his thirst. About half an hour later, Raji's wife insisted that he go help Suta. "Go bring that man into our home," she said. "We have to take care of him."

CHAPTER FOUR

Raji lifted Suta onto his shoulders and carried him to his house. His wife washed the blood off Suta's face and gave him food and medicine. The next morning, she asked why he had come.

"I came to tell you about Jesus Christ," Suta replied. "The Jesus Christ who healed sick people, who helped the poor and delivered them."

Hearing this, Raji's wife told Suta about her sister-in-law, who had been sick for months with no relief. "Can you pray for her?" she asked. "Can your Jesus help?"

"I will pray," Suta said. But first he explained the Gospel to them and said, "Jesus will do His work. I am just a simple man. I am here to pray in the name of Jesus."

When the sister-in-law came, Suta again explained the Gospel and prayed for the woman. After two days, her illness was gone.

Everyone in the village heard the news. The men who had attacked Suta came to Raji's house to ask for forgiveness. "We were wrong," they said. "You were preaching the true God, but we thought it was a foreign God. Please forgive us."

CHAPTER FOUR

All of Raji's family and Suta's attackers came to faith in Christ. Forty people became Christians that day, planting a new church in the village. "If I had not gone for preaching, I would have not got persecuted," Suta said. "But I did, and now there is one more church."

Every Sunday, Suta preaches at his home church in the morning before walking the 11 kilometres to preach at the new church. He still faces some opposition in the village from Hindu fundamentalists who try to intimidate him.

Suta is also targeting a third village for outreach. He shares the Gospel there as often as he can, even though villagers are not open to the Gospel.

When VOM workers asked Suta what he needed for his ministry, he told them a bicycle would be helpful because he spends a lot of time walking from village to village. Another need he mentioned was Bibles.

Suta also asked for prayer. "Through your prayer, we will be able to do more work of God in our areas," he said. "Through your prayers, we are strengthening our faith."

"Also please pray that when more persecutions are coming, the Lord will protect us. Without your prayer, we are nothing."

CHAPTER FOUR

Suta remains dedicated to telling others about Christ. “My prayer request is that I want to reach more villages,” he said. “I want to tell them about Jesus, and I want to see more people turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

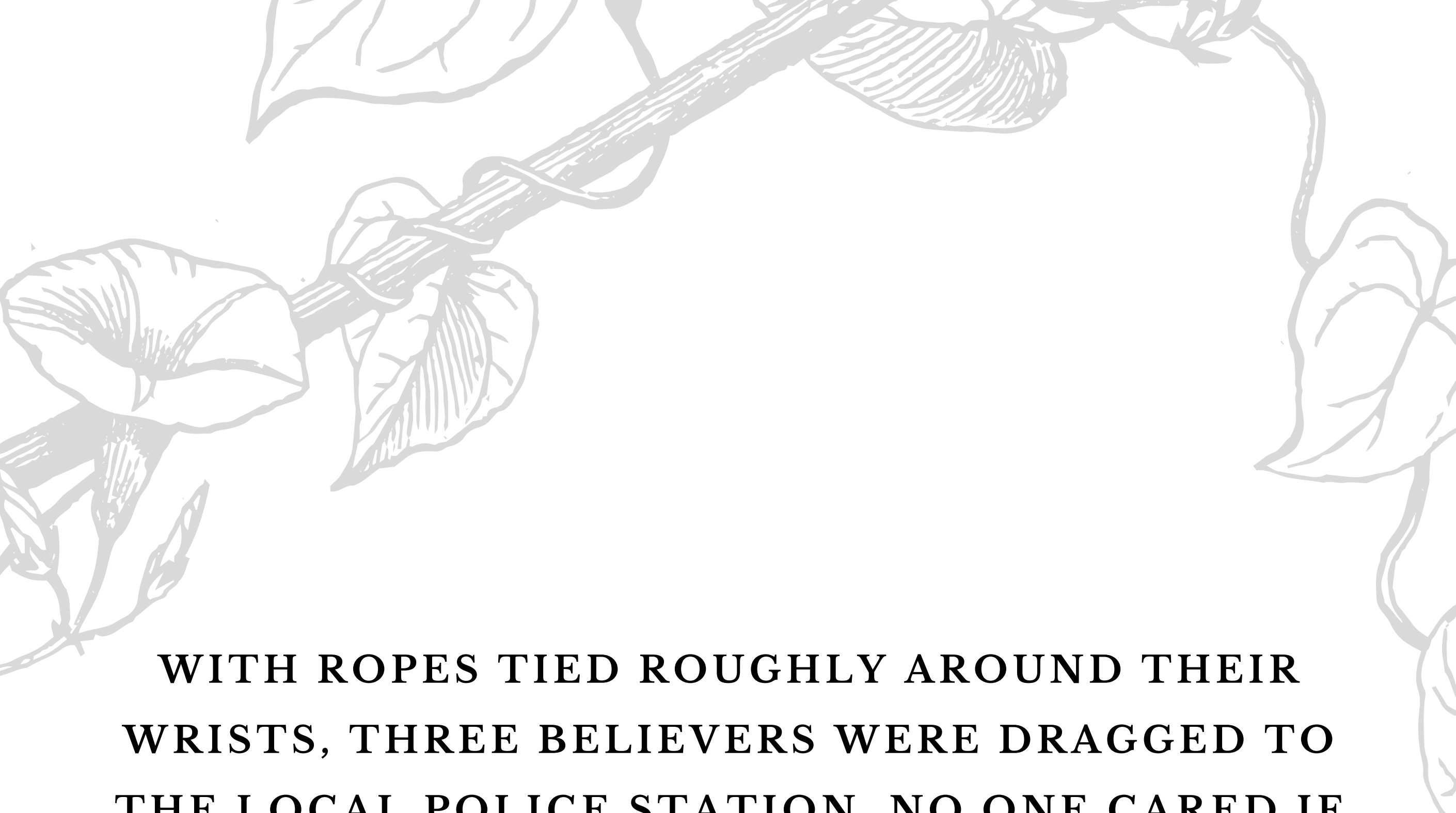





THE FRONT LINE

CHAPTER FIVE

BEATEN VICIOUSLY



WITH ROPES TIED ROUGHLY AROUND THEIR WRISTS, THREE BELIEVERS WERE DRAGGED TO THE LOCAL POLICE STATION. NO ONE CARED IF THEY FELL TO THE GROUND; THE BULLOCK MERELY DRAGGED THEM THROUGH THE MUD. SOME OF THEIR CLOTHES WERE RIPPED FROM THEIR BODIES WHILE THE VILLAGE STOOD BACK AND WATCHED THE SPECTACLE UNFOLD. EVEN THE FACT THAT ONE OF THE WOMEN HAD A SMALL BABY ON HER BACK DID NOT STOP THE PERSECUTION OR THE RIDICULE THEY HEAPED ON THE CHRISTIANS.



CHAPTER FIVE

High up in the mountains in the northern district of Vietnam is a small Hmong village with a church of 25 people. Pastor William, a dedicated 25-year-old, shepherds the group of believers.

It's very difficult to be a Christian in this province, and even harder to evangelise. In the three years and two months since he became a Christian, Pastor William has become the leader and shepherd for seven churches with around 500 believers.

Recently, Pastor William participated in the discipleship and training courses VOM has provided for many years in the mountains. He is a wonderful example of the dedication and commitment to the Gospel many Christian leaders in the north of Vietnam share.

For a long time, ancestral worship has enslaved tribal Vietnamese people. The village witch doctor is revered as the only one able to heal the villagers of their various sicknesses, but it comes at a great cost. It is the witch doctor who benefits most from the occult practice. If anyone is sick, they are brought to the witch doctor, who demands an animal for sacrificing. The family go hungry, the sick are not healed and the only one who benefits is the witch doctor.

CHAPTER FIVE

Soon, the people become indebted by their ancestral religion, but do not know any better.

Numerous times, Pastor William has been called to the home of the sick and asked if he would pray for a miracle to heal a child or family member.

But first, he always shares the Gospel so that they may believe in Christ. William tells them to renounce their old ways by burning their talismans and ancestral altars and by repenting of their occult manner of worship.

Only then does he pray for the Lord to perform a miracle on the sick. God has manifested His signs and wonders by demonstrating His healing power and many other people from the village have been challenged when they have seen the power of the Lord.

This has caused many to enquire about the Gospel and to ask Pastor William to share the salvation story with them.

Pastor William told us of a church under his care where there are only four families belonging to Jesus. They have been faithful despite the many forms of persecution the government has placed upon them.

CHAPTER FIVE

However, one family eventually succumbed to the pressure of constant persecution and has gone back to their old ways of idol worship. The government is continuing to try and bring back the other families to this form of worship, where they have control. But these brave believers have not denied Christ, their Saviour and Lord.

The three families travelled each Sunday to a church outside their village that welcomed them to worship together. Then, after a time, the government made a declaration forbidding them from leaving their village to worship at another village.

When the families told Pastor William, he said to them, “Stay and have your church together in your home by reading the Bible and praying. God can hear you there as well as He can hear you in our church.”

One Sunday morning as they met together, government officials and police came with around 100 villagers at 8am and disrupted their house church meeting.

They didn't knock, but broke the door down and instantly began viciously beating everyone present. Later, when the believers described the beating, they said they felt their bodies burning from the inside. Some couldn't even walk.

CHAPTER FIVE

Men, women – even two teenagers aged 14 and 15 – were all beaten mercilessly for over two hours. Then one man and two women, who were leaders in the small church, were tied and dragged 200 metres to the entrance to the village where the police station was located. They were treated like animals and the beatings began once more.

Sticks were used to beat the man, who couldn't defend himself, on his arms and legs. To make a public demonstration of their authority, the officials tied him to a bullock and dragged him around the village.

The three believers were absolutely exhausted from their ordeal and could hardly stand. Their clothing was torn from the beatings and being dragged on the ground left them partially naked, adding to their humiliation. No consideration was spared for the mother with the young child strapped to her back.

When the beating finally stopped, they were evicted from the village. They were not allowed to return to their homes, but were forced to leave immediately, leaving absolutely everything behind.

Slowly, the wounded believers travelled to reach Pastor William. He took them straight to hospital for treatment, where they took six days to recover from their injuries.

CHAPTER FIVE

The police instructed the hospital that the doctor must not write anything on the report saying that they were beaten and must state that nothing really happened to them at all.

Once the three believers had regained their strength, they journeyed back to their village. Their faith was firm as they said, “No matter what persecution we will have to face, we will not give up our faith in Christ Jesus. We will never deny Him.”

Soon after they returned, more government officials came and ripped apart their house until it was unliveable. Packing what they could, they moved to another village.

Now, every Sunday, these three believers and their families travel by motorbike 13 kilometres to worship God, even during these difficult times. Despite all of these events they still rejoice in the Lord and continue trusting God with their lives.



THANK YOU FOR READING.

Voice of the Martyrs exists to help, love and encourage persecuted Christians by providing Bibles, ministry resources, medical aid and practical assistance.

Our ministry is inspired by Hebrews 13:3, “Remember the prisoners as if chained with them – those who are mistreated – since you yourselves are in the body also.”

We support Christians who are or have been persecuted for their faith and involvement in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a hostile environment. We give their testimony a voice, informing and mobilising Christians in Australia to stand with their persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ.

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