

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

If This Preacher Were Taken Hostage

Brian R. Kenyon

Ghana, Africa, has many Muslims, although they are not typically the radicalized adherents who often make the news. Though it does not seem very likely, with the hate some have toward Americans and the seeming “bounty” that some radical Muslims have placed upon American lives, the possibility exists that this preacher and/or his fellow mission workers could be taken hostage and/or murdered while in Ghana. Below are some thoughts in case something like this should happen.

God Is Glorified And We Are Blessed When We Suffer For Him

There is a definite connection between suffering for the Lord’s cause and glorifying God. Peter said that “if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Pet. 4:16). In writing of the blessings of adoption, Paul wrote, “and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Rom. 8:17). Not only is God glorified, but also we are blessed when we suffer for Him. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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” (Mt. 5:10-12 cf. 2 Tim. 2:11-12). Peter summarized both the idea of glorifying God and of being blessed in suffering when he wrote, “If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified” (1 Pet. 4:14).

Therefore, if this preacher is taken hostage, he will see it as an opportunity to glorify God. If he is taken, there will be no mistake as to why — not simply because he is an American, but because he is a preacher of the Gospel. If you see him on YouTube surrounded by masked men with AK-47s, begging for his life, know that he is either drugged up or so dog tired that he is delirious!

Our Suffering In This Life Is Nothing Compared to Heaven

Based upon the Quran’s false promise of a materialistic afterlife, complete with silk attire, luxurious food, golden goblets, and scores of young virgins to fulfill every sexual appetite (Quran, *Surah* 55:46-78; 76:11-22), many “suicide bombers”

have gone to their graves deceived, only, one day, to wake up “being in torments in Hades” (Lk. 16:23). There is only one Book truly authored by God — the Bible! This could be proven beyond doubt in a court of law by real evidence that would overwhelmingly convince any objective jury. God through Paul said, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). In another epistle, Paul wrote:

We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed — ¹⁰always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹²So then death is working in us, but life in you ... ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:8-12, 17-18)

Imagine that! Paul referred to persecution as “light affliction”! Why? Because compared to eternity, it is!

Therefore, if this preacher is taken hostage, suffering for righteousness’ sake, know that whatever struggles he encounters in this life will pale away to insignificance compared to the joys that await. The afterlife for a faithful Christian involves something far better than the young virgins of Islamic religion — it involves being in the presence of God for eternity (Rev. 21:1-7, 22-27; 22:1-5)! All of us must be able to say with Paul, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

We Need Strength When Facing Persecution

Some may think this article is too militant and/or dramatic; however, the possibility under contemplation exists, and in the event that it should happen, this preacher wants you to know that he has prepared for such an event all his Christian life. All of us need to realize that Christianity, as revealed in the New Testament, is the only religion approved by God (cf. Jn. 14:6). Though many would think this an inaccurate statement due to the plurality of “Christian” and world religions, it is nonetheless true. No other religion can be objectively proven to have originated with God, providentially and miraculously worked out by God, and completely fulfilled in God, the incarnate Word (cf. Jn. 1:1-3, 14)! With this being true, Christianity, as revealed in the New Testament, is the only religion worth living for and worth dying for.

This preacher, however, is fully aware of the potential that he might deny the Lord when persecution arises. He remembers what Peter once said, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be;” that Jesus predicted, “before the rooster crows ... you will deny Me three times;” and then how Peter “spoke more vehemently, ‘If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!’” (Mk. 14:29-31). Yet, when the chips were down, Peter denied the Lord three times (Mt. 26:69-75). Although Peter learned from his weakness and became one of the foremost encouragers in how to endure persecution (cf. 1 Pet. 2:20; 3:14; 4:12-16; 5:10), it shows that even the seemingly strongest person can, in moments of fear and weakness, do that which he never thought he would. If this preacher is taken hostage, he plans to talk to his captives about the Lord and show them from the Bible how they too can be saved. However, if they are “cut to the heart” and “gnash on him with their teeth” (cf. Acts 7:54), pray that this preacher does not deny the Lord like Peter, but that he may “glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet. 4:16). Thank you. ♥ *Brian*

True Discipleship Involves Suffering

Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Mt. 16:24-25). Jesus emphasized two points. First, true discipleship requires crucifying self (Mt. 16:24 cf. Mt. 16:10:38-39; Gal. 2:20). To “deny himself” shows that each individual must cease serving his own will, and totally give himself to God (Mt. 16:24b cf. Rom. 8:5-9; Col. 3:1-14). “Take up his cross” (Mt. 16:24c) is not minor inconveniences, but the consequences of dying to self (cf. Mt. 10:16-22, 34-39) — taking on a death sentence with Christ! Second, true discipleship requires giving one’s entire being to Christ (Mt. 16:25). To save one’s temporal life at all costs (accomplished by refusing to “take up one’s cross”) leads to the loss of eternal life, but to loose one’s temporal life as a result of “taking up one’s cross” results in eternal life. All true disciples of Christ must be “willing” to lay their life down for Him (cf. Rev. 2:10). ♥ *Brian*

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Taleah Anderson's spinal fusion surgery on her neck last Thursday, June 1st went well, but she is still in alot of pain. Becky Sheumaker is still not feeling well. Please continue to pray for Jim Turner, Ginny Hamby, Margaret Coone, Sharon Mathis Washington, Josephine Bowman.

Relatives: Benny Martin

Shut In Members: Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Don Starks, Sharon Edler and Duane Nelson.

Others: Joyce Stearsman, Chrissi Fuesner, Connie Hyer, Johnny King and Jack Pinckert.

Upcoming Events

Sun.-Wed. June 11th-14th: Sebring Parkway Church of Christ Vacation Bible School from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Saturday June 17th: Men's breakfast at the Central Church of Christ in Haines City at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday June 17th: Wedding for Elizabeth Tubbs and Richard Dean at the College Road Church of Christ in Palatka, FL. Reception to follow. Please R.S.V.P. at 863-381-1511.

June 22nd-24th: Weeki Wachee K-5 camp. If interested contact Orange St. Church of Christ, Chad or Sabrina Tagtow at 863-286-5811 or 863-412-0022.

Thank You's

Dear brothers and sisters, Thank you for your thoughts and prayers for Ron. He is finally feeling better and if the Lord wills, we plan to leave next week for North Carolina. We will miss you all.

In Christian love, Ron & Judy Ford

Thank you for expressing God's love in such a thoughtful way. We wanted to take a moment and thank all those at the South Florida Ave. C of C and F.S.O.P. for all their love and support during our battle with cancer.

In Christian love, The Pinckert family.

Sympathy

Sandy West, niece of Carlene Long, passed away on Sunday, June 4th. Please keep Carlene and her family in your prayers.

Visitors

Tiffany Hash, Megan and Sammy, Ruthie Davila and Brittany.

 Tune into AM 1330 (station WWAB) with your friends and neighbors every Monday from 5:00-5:30 p.m. for the "Way of Truth" program. This is a joint effort to evangelize involving Terrance Brownlow-Dindy (6th Street) and Hiram Kemp. Let's point our community to the Bible!

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

June

Bobby Sheumaker **Table** C.J. Grimes
Ken Walker **Assist** Tucker Sweeney

Sunday, June 11, 2017
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Stacey Paulin
Prayer David Anderson

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Matt Willcut
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Jimmy Sweeney
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Paul Romine

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader David Williams
Opening Prayer John McShane
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Tim Croson

Greeters Debra/ Melissa
Att. Cards Paul and Sebastian
Open & Close Building Tim Croson

Wed. June 14, 2017

Song Leader Steve Hunley
Opening Prayer John McShane
Closing Prayer David Anderson

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - (863) 602-9005

Sunday, June 18, 2017
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Frank Hamby
Prayer Tucker Sweeney

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Matt Willcut
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Kenny French
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Tyler Anderson

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader David Williams
Opening Prayer Steve Hunley
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Ken Walker

Greeters The Bingles
Att. Cards Willcut boys
Open & Close Building Tim Croson

Wed. June 21, 2017

Song Leader Kyle Bingle
Opening Prayer Kenny French
Closing Prayer Paul Romine

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

May 14	\$5,484.25
May 21	\$5,163.29
May 28	\$4,431.30
June 04	\$7,164.00
Contribution Average	\$5,421.43
2017 Weekly Budget	\$4,716.51

WHO IS OUR MASTER?

Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). This verse teaches the impossibility of serving two masters! **Complete Loyalty to One, Rules Out Complete Loyalty to Another** In ancient days, a slave was meant to belong wholly to one master. It must be pointed out that slavery is not the same as employment, although some principles may overlap. We may simultaneously serve two employers, but not two "masters" (which is from the same Greek word usually translated "Lord"). Failure inevitably results when we attempt to give ourselves wholly to two masters. There can be no "middle ground." In each case, one attitude toward one master rules out that same attitude toward the other master. If there is "love" for one master, there can only be "hate" for the other. If we are "loyal" to one master, we will only "despise" the other. **God and "Mammon" Are Polar Opposites** The word "mammon" is used as a personification of wealth and/or material prosperity (cf. Luke 16:9, 11, 13). The Scriptures document well the spiritually fatal problems that materialism causes (cf. 1 Timothy 6:6-10; 2 Timothy 4:10). Even if wealth is gained legitimately, it is evil when it rivals our loyalty to God. It has been said, "Money is a good servant, but a ruthless master." Worldliness is totally incompatible with God (1 John 2:15-17). We can devote ourselves wholly to God or wholly to "mammon," but it is impossible to *(continued below)*



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

Continue praying for our YES II campaign to Penonome, Panama, July 1-9, 2017. Our young people and their chaperones will be passing out tracts, inviting people to the Gospel meeting, and conducting personal Bible studies.



(continued from above) devote ourselves wholly to both (cf. Matthew 10:37-39; 22:37). **We Must Choose a Master** If we have not obeyed Christ, He is not our Lord (Luke 6:46). Only by obeying the doctrine of Christ can we become the "servants of righteousness" (Romans 6:16-18). Why not choose Christ and obey His word today? ❤️ *Brian*



PLEASE PRAY for **HIRAM** and **BRIAN** who are spreading the Gospel in Ghana. Please pray for their safety and success!
GHANA MISSION TO EVANGELIZE

VBS **Saturday, July 29th**

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. (Romans 1:16)