

Former High-Caste Hindu Suffers for the Gospel in India

Simon Paul has endured beatings and family rejection as he starts new churches

Persecution and Christianity go hand in hand in India. That's no surprise to local believers. They understand suffering is a reality that comes with reaching their nation for Christ.

Just ask Simon Paul. He has laid down his life and his lifestyle to spread the gospel in his homeland of India.

He has suffered beatings with iron rods for sharing the gospel in a village in Gujarat state. He's been followed and harassed by persecutors. He's fasted as long as 21 days on water only, praying for hours and weeping for the lost.

"My heartbeat is souls," he said. "I must reach as many as I can. All of India needs to know Jesus Christ. I can do nothing myself—victory over evil in India is in Jesus Christ alone."

Paul was born into a high-caste Hindu family and became an engineer with a prominent company. His hungry soul drew him to the Bible and Christ. After his salvation in 1997, Paul and his wife and children were rejected by their Hindu family and forced from their home.

Paul believed he was being called by God to Gujarat in 1999. There he found a church that had been attacked by radical Hindus. He encouraged the pastor, who led him to more damaged

churches.

Since then, Paul has worked continually to establish the church in Gujarat and bring the gospel to India's many unreached people groups. Last year, Paul and his team reached more than 150 villages that had never heard the gospel.

Paul's missions teams have launched earthquake relief efforts, rebuilt churches damaged or destroyed by persecutors, started a Christian orphanage, installed water wells in remote villages, planted new churches, and started Christian libraries for national pastors.

Persecution is always a factor when ministering in India, Paul reiterated. In March, he was evangelizing in Gujarat, when Hindu-Muslim violence broke out in Ahmedabad.

"We were in a village in Dangs district, ministering the gospel," he said. "Everything was peaceful. Then we heard that the Muslims had set fire to a bus of Hindus traveling to build a Ram Temple where a Mosque once stood.

"Suddenly all of Gujarat erupted in riots. The Hindus in our area have held a grudge against us for a long time for preaching the gospel. They used the riots as an opportunity to attack us."

An angry mob brandishing iron rods, torches and clubs descended on the village and attacked Christians. When they left, many, including Paul, lay wounded and bleeding. The village was on fire.

“They beat me all over with iron rods,” Paul said. “They would not let me speak to them. When I woke up, I was in the hospital. One of my team members was also severely beaten, but he saved my life.”

Today, Paul continues to focus on the Great Commission by reaching the people groups who have never heard the gospel and teaching them to reach others.

“Many organizations and pastors target the cities where the work is easier,” Paul continued. “Most of the people we reach are tribes who have never heard the gospel.

“God gives the victory. It is a small thing to go through hardship to save a soul.”

Lynn Hitchcock