

Franklin Graham Warns of the Coming Persecution in America

Dear Friend,

The persecution of Christians is escalating worldwide. A recent survey found that in just the past year, more than 7,100 believers were killed for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In many countries, they are being systematically tortured and slaughtered by Islamic radicals bent on eradicating any vestige of Christianity. Churches are burned, looted and bulldozed. Pastors are frequently targeted and martyred.

In dozens of other countries, Christians are severely oppressed by government authorities and routinely denied any chance at an education and jobs. They live as second-class citizens, shunned and mocked by their neighbors who despise Christ.

And make no mistake, hostility toward Christians in the United States is on the rise and will grow unless we stand up for our freedoms of religion and conscience. Believers in this country have already become the target of a culture that has turned its back on Almighty God. This is being driven especially by progressives, LGBT activists and the anti-God forces of secularism.

In Illinois, the Christian owner of a bed-and-breakfast has been under intense attack by a gay couple for declining to host their same-sex wedding. The state has fined the owner \$81,000, citing his use of Scripture to defend his position as one of the justifications for the fine. Bakers in Oregon have been forced to shut their business down and fined by the state after they said no to creating a wedding cake for a gay couple. In Washington, a 71-year-old Christian florist is

battling the state over refusing to participate in a same-sex wedding. In New Mexico and Colorado, Christian business owners have been persecuted by state agencies and the courts for adhering to their sincerely held beliefs on the sanctity of marriage between one man and one woman. These are government actions—right here in our own nation—targeting citizens for trying to live their lives according to biblical principles.

That's why I'm particularly grateful for the governors and legislators of states like Mississippi and North Carolina. In Mississippi, Gov. Phil Bryant signed a freedom of religion bill to protect the rights of Christians to live out their faith in obedience to the Word of God. Without this kind of protection, churches could be forced to perform same-sex marriages, and businesses could face an onslaught of lawsuits by gay activists for refusing to accommodate their perverted lifestyle.

In my home state of North Carolina, Gov. Pat McCrory called a special session of the state legislature to pass a bill restricting transgenders from claiming the right to walk into any public restroom they choose. This bill was necessary to protect women and children from sexual predators. Immediately after the passage, the state came under a concerted attack by companies supporting the misguided policies of gay activists and threatening to withdraw their business from the state. Pray that the governor will hold his ground and not give in.

Unfortunately, governors from states like Georgia, Indiana and Virginia eventually bowed to pressure from corporations, media and gay activists and vetoed religious freedom bills passed by their state legislators. We must not underestimate the power of godless, immoral forces who are seeking to impose their anti-Christian agenda on all of us.

The Bible says that we should not be surprised by such hostility and persecution. "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come Yes, and all who desire to

live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:1, 12, NKJV).

On Easter Sunday, believers gathered at a local park in Lahore, Pakistan, to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That afternoon, Islamic Taliban terrorists massacred more than 70 people in a suicide attack, including many women and children. At least 320 were badly injured. Afterward, the Taliban bragged about the slaughter. Two weeks earlier, two churches were bombed during worship services, killing 15 and wounding many more.

In Niger, churches have been bombed and others burned to the ground by angry hordes of Islamic followers. Four national Bible translators were recently murdered by extremists in a Middle Eastern country. Eleven indigenous Christians were crucified and beheaded in Aleppo, Syria, last fall. Four nuns were brutally mowed down by Islamic gunmen in Yemen in March. These are just a few of the thousands of believers who have been persecuted for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We cannot look the other way. The Bible says, "You are the body of Christ, and members individually. ... If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:27, 26).

I am continuing to go state to state with the Decision America Tour, and we thank God for His hand of blessing on these prayer rallies. More than 71,000 people have joined us at the events in the states where we have been so far, and more than 22,000 people have let us know that they are committing themselves to pray for America and its future, to stand firm on the Word of God and live out their faith boldly, and to actively engage in the current election process. If you would commit to the same pledge, you can read it and add your name to it by visiting .

The month of May will be our busiest on the tour so far, with prayer rallies in the capital cities of seven states. We ask

you to pray for us and these events as we go.

In the first week of May, we held rallies in **Nashville, Tennessee; Frankfort, Kentucky and Charleston, West Virginia.**

Later in the month, we will be in **Jefferson City, Missouri; Lincoln, Nebraska; Pierre, South Dakota; and Bismarck, North Dakota.** If you have friends in any of these states, be sure to encourage them to join us at their capitol.

I present the gospel clearly at every Decision America Tour prayer gathering, and we have seen hundreds of people come to faith on their capitol steps, accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior and experiencing the forgiveness of their sins and the hope of a new life—eternal life. We praise God for each one.

Going to all 50 states is an expensive undertaking but a huge opportunity to make a difference for the kingdom of God. We count on your continued prayers and financial support. Thank you for standing with us for the sake of the gospel.

May God richly bless you. {eo}

This article originally appeared on .