

Pastor and Son Hospitalized, Church Destroyed During Extremist Attack

Persecution of biblical proportions is still occurring in the world today.

Physical violence, families threatened and churches torn down is a frightening reality in the modern age, just as it was during the reign Diocletian and the Roman Empire.

This persecution of Christians reared its ugly head when Pastor John Balidawa, 35, and his 14-year-old son were brutally beaten and hospitalized by the Muslim extremists who also destroyed their church in the Mayuge District of eastern Uganda.

On March 15, Pastor Balidawa and his son, Gilbert Sanja, were preparing their church, Ebenezer Christian Center, to hold an all-night prayer vigil. As they were setting up, they began hearing rocks hitting the roof of the church and were then approached by six Muslim radicals led by Skeikh Shafi Mukama.

Mukama ordered Balidawa and his son to leave the church, and after refusing to do so, the pair were then beaten by Mukama's thugs resulting in their hospitalization.

"When I refused to obey their orders, the sheikh and two others started slapping me and then pushed me to the floor and thereafter stepped on my stomach," Pastor Balidawa told Morning Star News. "Others started boxing my son, who started wailing and crying for help. For me and my son to survive is by God's grace."

Pastor Balidawa was beaten so severely that he lost consciousness during the attack. When he came to, he found

himself in the Buluba Hospital which is owned and operated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Jinja.

Thankfully, his son was next to him in the hospital, joined by the church's senior Pastor Gerald Kato Wakabi.

As reported by Morning Star News, "Pastor Balidawa sustained a broken leg, a broken bone in his hand, swelling in his face and injuries to his intestines and stomach, Pastor Wakabi said. Pastor Balidawa's son suffered a deep cut on his forehead, a broken bone in his right hand and swelling of his face."

The day following the attack, Pastor Wakabi said that he found a note left behind by the attackers reading, "No more church in this area. This area is holy ground for Allah's worship only."

The devil certainly likes to resort to physical violence when he is losing the spiritual war in an area.

This was not the first note the church has received since its founding in January, 2022.

In August of that same year, a message was sent to Wakabi saying, "You should remove your church, because we cannot watch our members turning to Christianity and keep quiet."

As the church grew, it recorded 12 converts of Islam to Christianity, placing it squarely in the crosshairs of the local mosque.

To stop the spread of the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, the local Muslims applied the same techniques as Saul of Tarsus: persecute the Christians so that fear will stop them from spreading the gospel of Jesus.

"This incident has scared many believers," Pastor Wakabi told Morning Star News. "I believe they will be restored spiritually, but, all in all, it is not easy as per now."

Biblical literacy is so important in times of trials for Christians such as this.

As the storm of persecution batters the spiritual doors to a believer's heart, it is during this assault that the Word of God shines brightest.

Encouragement can be found in verses like James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he is tried, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

The pastors of Ebenezer Christian Center in Uganda may be tempted to stop spreading the message of Jesus Christ amidst this assault on the gospel, but the Word says they will be blessed beyond comprehension for their actions.

So as Christians around the world join them in prayer for strength, endurance and victory in the spiritual battle taking place, take note that they are living a Romans 5:3-5 moment, by which Paul instructed Christians in how to deal with this exact situation: "Not only so, but we also boast in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces patience, patience produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." {eo}

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James Lasher is Staff Writer for *Charisma Media*.