



Serving Christ and His Suffering Church



There is no fear in death, for death has lost its sting

Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, Chair of the Board of Trustees, TBF Trust

Why do so many of us fear death? We know that our immaterial souls will live on and so will our God-given spirits, so why are we troubled about losing our bodies? For some there is uncertainty about what lies ahead in the next life. But for Christians there is certainty. As believers, we have already begun our eternal lives. Leaving this earthly life for the reality of heaven will only open up eternal life in a greater and fuller way.

Some fear death because of what they will lose. Maybe we define ourselves on the basis of what we have - our jobs or vocations, our money, our house, our investments. We cannot understand what will happen when these have been stripped away and we have nothing left. But for the Christian true riches lie in our heavenly rewards, in hearing the words "Well done, good and faithful servant". Our treasures are the gold and silver we have stored up in heaven and our eternal crown.

Some fear death because they think it will involve a loss of identity. They believe their individuality will melt away in the next life. But the Bible tells us that our identity is in Christ and it is He who defines us. The Christ-life we experience now will continue in glory and we will keep our individuality.

Some fear death in case it comes before they have achieved their purpose in this life. But, for a Christian, our purpose is to fulfil the will of the Father and walk in the pathways of His Son.

Some fear death because they find this life empty and meaningless and

expect the next life to be more of the same. They think that their misery and suffering will continue forever. But a Christian's life always has meaning and purpose, both now and in heaven.

Some fear death because what lies ahead for them is unknown and unknowable. Is death just an end of existence, as the body decomposes? Or they may face death with the foreboding of a vague belief in heaven and hell, not knowing where their place will be for eternity.

But for the Christian, the unknowable is known, the unseeable is seen. Death is going Home to our Beloved, the one we have seen "in a glass darkly" and shall at last see face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12), our glorious risen Lord. The Jesus we knew and loved on earth is the same Jesus we shall know and love in heaven, resplendent in light and majesty. That is why Christians can look death in the face, without fear or foreboding.

Easter is the most important day in the Church's calendar, when we remember not just the death of our Lord Jesus Christ for our sins, but also His resurrection in power and glory. We move in our thoughts from the cross to the empty tomb, rejoicing that

Up from the grave He arose
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes*

So as Christians we do not fear death. Rather, we embrace the victorious life of our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

* From Robert Lowry's hymn "Low in the grave He lay"

What TBF Trust is doing by God's grace and your gifts

Mongolia: making braille Bible portions

TBF Trust covered the transport costs of sending a braille machine to Mongolia. It is being used to translate Bible portions into braille for Mongolian people who are blind or visually impaired. Please pray for all involved in this project, for wisdom in selecting the texts for translation, for the machine to function well, and that the resulting braille Bible portions will be a blessing to many.



Apprenticeships in Nepal

“Your generosity is breaking the cycle of poverty and restoring dignity to those who once had no opportunities” wrote our project partner in Nepal. TBF Trust is helping fund an apprenticeship programme to train young Christian men and women in skills for income-generation. The apprentices are chosen mainly from remote villages or other underprivileged backgrounds.



Here are two testimonies of apprentices from the Chepang people. Please pray for Nisha, Sandesh and all the other apprentices that they will learn their skills effectively, and grow in their faith.

Nisha's testimony

“I'm 19 years old and I belong to the Chepang ethnic group. Our people have lived in the jungles for generations, disconnected from modern society. I feel incredibly blessed to be part of the Apprenticeship Programme...

“My father used to be a pastor, dedicated to serving God and spreading the Gospel. However, for the past five years, he has been paralysed, making it impossible for him to continue his mission work.”

Not only this calamity, but also nobody in the family had a way to earn money. Now, however, Nisha is doing an apprenticeship in bakery and cake-making skills that will enable her to provide for herself and her family. “May God bless you abundantly for your kindness and generosity,” says Nisha to TBF Trust donors.

Sandesh's testimony

"I am honoured to share how God has been faithful in my life through the support of TBF Trust... Life has always been a struggle, and opportunities for a better future have never reached us [Chepang people]. I am a church youth leader, and I have a wife and a young daughter. But like many in my community, I have no formal education, and my wife is also uneducated..."

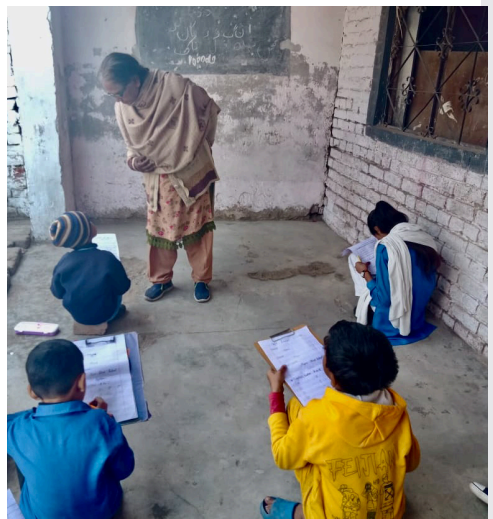


"But despite all these struggles, the best thing that has happened to our community is that we have found Christ. Now, our whole village gathers every week to worship the living God. Even though we are poor, we have found true joy and peace in Jesus."

Sandesh is learning brick-laying and other construction skills. This is changing his life, he says, "giving me a way to provide for my family and help my community. For the first time, I have hope for the future. I now believe that one day, we will have proper houses, decent food, and a better life for our children. I thank God for TBF Trust and for the people who have made this opportunity possible. Your support is not just helping me learn a skill. It is helping an entire community rise out of poverty."

Schooling for Christian brick-kiln children in Pakistan

Please pray for 212 Christian boys, 218 Christian girls and their 20 Christian teachers at 10 schools in brick-kiln communities in Pakistan. With funding from TBF Trust, the schools enrol children from the neediest families, children who would face bullying, humiliation and discrimination in government schools or have no education at all. The schools are small and very simple, some without even a roof over the heads of the children. "In a world where they are treated as outcasts, these education centres stand as a ray of light, offering them dignity, knowledge, and the promise of a better future," says our project partner. "For the first time, these children can dream of becoming doctors, teachers, and leaders, free from the shadows of injustice. Their parents, burdened by the chains of poverty and oppression, now see a new path for their children, one where they are valued, empowered, and given the chance to break free from the cycle of hardship."



For your prayers: an update from Syria

A grandmother of about 70 and her daughter were the only inhabitants left in a building in the Syrian city of Homs. All the rest of the extended family of Christians who used to live there had gone. Islamist fighters came and threatened the two women, breaking some of the windows and terrorising them. The women remained. A second time the fighters came and did the same. When they came a third time, the two women fled.

In the coastal town of Baniyas three different Islamist factions attacked a Christian home. One after the other, the groups of fighters came, damaging and destroying the family's possessions. A family member, the father of a church minister, ventured into the street afterwards to look at his car which had been smashed up. While he was outside a sniper shot him in the head and he died.

"Christians are living in total fear," said a Syrian Christian to TBF Trust on 24 March. Since December the country has been under the control of HTS Islamist militants. At one level life is strictly organised with a hierarchy of extremist Muslim amirs or sheikhs who control every town, village and city neighbourhood, even those whose inhabitants are mainly Christians. At another level there is lawlessness and chaos. Dozens of competing groups of Islamist fighters are at large on the streets, some of them accountable to leaders, others just running amok.

The main target of the fighters are currently the Alawites, the peaceable Islamic sect to which deposed President Bashar al-Assad belonged. But

Christians and Alawites often live in the same neighbourhoods and therefore Christians share in the terror aimed at the Alawites. They hear the shooting as bullets fly around in the streets and the shouts of "Allahu Akbar". Sometimes their homes are broken into and their property destroyed. A few have been killed.

"Why? We Christians don't own weapons and we don't kill." This is what a Syrian church leader said to the Islamist militants who were pressing him to accompany them as they ransacked Christian homes, ostensibly looking for weapons, in reality helping themselves to anything they wanted. Christians dare not speak up about incidents like this, knowing that any complaints would make them a major target of the Islamist militants instead of a minor target. Already the word on the street was: "First the Alawites, then the Christians."

There are frequent efforts to try to convert Christians to Islam e.g. vehicles driving through Christian areas of Damascus with loudspeakers. But a young Christian man who tried to witness in public by singing Christian hymns received death threats.

According to the World Christian Council for Peace (WCCP), Christians now make up less than 3% of the population of Syria (down from about 10%). Hundreds of thousands have left the country, especially since the outbreak of civil war in 2011. If emigration were to continue at the same rate, Syria would be empty of Christians by 2045, says the WCCP. The WCCP notes that "massacres, scenes of horrific violence, and repression that Syria has witnessed ... home invasions, killings, thefts, and torture", which escalated in March, will make more Christians want to leave. But emigration has become very difficult since HTS took power.

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They have closed the border to Lebanon and European governments no longer accept that Syrians are in need of refuge.

On 13 March a new constitution was unveiled. According to Article 3, “Islamic jurisprudence is the principal source of legislation”. In other words, the laws of Syria are now to be based on Islamic law (sharia). This was no surprise, as sharia had been the effective law imposed by HTS since they took power.

Syria has changed almost overnight from a civil society, notable for mutual respect between all religious groups, to a strict Islamic state. The imams of local mosques are being replaced by fanatical extremists.

On top of this, the country is wracked by hunger, unemployment is high and many people are suffering dreadfully. Syria has become a cash economy, where the banks are ineffective, yet there is even a shortage of bank notes. Please pray for Syria.

Have you got your TBF Trust prayer diary for April-May?

Please contact the TBFT office (see below) to request your copy or for extra copies to give your Christian friends.



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“We greatly value your unwavering commitment and support to the Armenian Church and to all Christian sisters and brothers around the world who are in need. Your selfless service and boundless compassion have been a bright testimony to your kind heart and philanthropic spirit...”

As you embark on this new chapter of service in your new capacity, we pray that the Almighty Lord grants you and your beloved wife, Rosemary, strong health, strength and encouragement to carry forth your sacred mission with renewed faith and unwavering dedication.”

*A senior church leader in Armenia
writing to Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, 24 February 2025*

Could you leave a legacy to TBF Trust?

May we invite you prayerfully to consider including a legacy to TBF Trust when you write your will? If the Lord leads you to care for persecuted Christians in this way, you could use the following wording:

“I give to TBF Trust (registered charity number 271602) at Unit 2, Fordbrook Business Centre, Marlborough Road, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 5NU the sum of £..... (free of all taxes) for its general purposes and I declare that the receipt of the Treasurer or other authorised officer will be a sufficient discharge to my executor(s).”

Alternatively, your legacy could be expressed as a percentage of your estate.

*Front cover image: Sandesh, a church youth leader from Nepal.
Read his story on page 4.*



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