



Good Friday with the Nuba

Nuba Christians celebrate Jesus
(Photo credit: Ernie Didot)

I came across an interesting theological/philosophical question when searching online for the lyrics to the hymn below. The [Desiring God](#) editor, David Mathis, asks concerning “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken,” do we have a right to sing *words that confess more than we can claim*? Mathis says that like David, in psalm after psalm, we can “sing above our heads,” profess “not only what we have obtained, but to press on, to strain forward, to grasp what lies ahead.

It is not “singing above our heads” for the Rt. Reverend Andudu Adam Elnail and his people in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan to sing “Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee.” It is reality for the Church in the Nuba Mountains to “be despised, forsaken” by all but Jesus. It is the cost of following Him.

You have learned about this reality in this week’s devotions. Today, on Good Friday, we contemplate the **enormity** of what it means for God to “empty Himself of all but love” and die for us on the Cross. We think of Jesus’ agony and abandonment, how “He was despised and rejected by men” and how “the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Our spirits, our hearts long to sing “I will follow Thee, my Savior. Thou hast shed Thy blood for me!” We want to echo what we see in the lives of our Nuba brothers and sisters: “And thou all the world forsake Thee, by Thy grace I will follow Thee.”

And there it is. *Grace*. By Thy *grace* I will follow Thee. The familiar and comforting words of 2 Corinthians 12: 9, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.”

Our precious brothers and sisters in the Nuba Mountains who we love and honor for their beautiful faith would be the first to tell us that they are not Super Christians. No, as Paul said, they will “boast all the more gladly” of their weaknesses, ‘so that the power of Christ’ may rest upon them, *because they belong to a Super God!*

Titus 2: 11-14 says that “the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.” That grace is “training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled,

upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

This, too, is reality in the Nuba Mountains. The grace of God has is bringing salvation for *all* people! Through decades of persecution, the Church grew. Now, with a cessation of armed conflict and freedom from *Sharia*, the Church is growing even more. GAFCON Communications Director, Ernie Didot, [just returned](#) from visiting the Nuba refugee community at Yida Refugee Camp in South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains region itself. In [this video of the Sudan Church](#), Didot talks about how people, including Muslims, are coming to Jesus.

In addition, the God of great grace is also a God of great miracles. I have often compared life of Christians in Sudan to the life of God’s people the Israelites in the Hebrew scriptures of the Old Testament. Particularly to the believers under enslavement by Egypt, or captivity by Persia or Babylon! (*In fact, this is one reason why it is so important that all of the people groups of Sudan and South Sudan should have the Old Testament translated into their own language.*)

Yes, the Nuba Christians have suffered many, many fires of affliction and persecution. By God’s grace, they have refused to deny Jesus. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the young men in Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, they have said that they know that God is able to deliver them, “but if not” they would still not serve other gods.

But sometimes, as with the three young Hebrew men, God performs a miracle. (By the way, their original Hebrew names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. This is something else the Nuba and other Sudanese/South Sudanese have in common with the Israelites in exile, cultural cleansing by the oppressor, including changing names!) Bishop Andudu [explained](#) to Ernie Didot about God’s miracle, delivering the Christians from Khartoum’s Antonov bombers while they were gathered together for worship, well in target range. Watch Didot’s video for GAFCON, [Sudan and Bishop Andudu: A Bomber Appeared](#), to hear more about the miracle that God performed for His children in the Nuba Mountains that day.

Surely God’s irresistible grace has been at work in the witness of the Nuba Church to those who were lost and are now coming to Christ. For all of us, this Good Friday, there is a God who loves us, a Savior who died for us, and though all the world forsake us, by His grace we will follow Him.

Suggested Actions:

- WATCH THE VIDEOS!
- Pray for Bishop Andudu and his family, and all of the Christians in the Nuba Mountains.
- If you would like to help promote the statement by dozens of civil society groups in the Nuba Mountains and in Blue Nile State, Sudan, urging the international community

ensure that Sudan have equality and religious freedom for all, please contact me and Bishop Andudu through the Suffering Church Network on the GAFCON website.

Prayer:

Jesus, I my cross have taken
All to leave and follow Thee
Though I be despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shalt be.

*I will follow Thee, my Savior,
Thou hast shed Thy blood for me.
And though all the world forsake Thee,
By Thy grace I will follow Thee.*

Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought, or hoped, or known;
Yet, how rich is my condition,
God and Heaven are still my own.

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Savior too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me,
Thou art not like them, untrue.

And while Thou shalt smile upon me
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate and friends may shun me,
Show Thy face and all is bright.

O 'tis not in grief to harm me,
While Thy love is left to me!
O 'twere not in joy to charm me,
Were that joy not found in Thee!

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847) (verses)
James Lawson (chorus)

I've been so blessed to write these Lent devotions and help you focus on our persecuted brothers and sisters. If you'd like to know more about what you can do to help, or just want more information about a specific country, please feel free to contact me through the Institute on Religion and Democracy, Washington, DC, www.theird.org or read more articles at our blog, www.juicyecumenism.com. God bless you. In Jesus' love, Faith McDonnell