



## Grace Bible Chapel

Lord's Day, November 22, 2020

Pastor Ken's Biblical Nuggets

### **“Wherever I Go, Persecution Follows Me”**

#### **Hindu Extremist Slashes Pastor With Machete In India – But God Does A Miracle**

##### **The Ambush:**

The attack came out of nowhere. One minute, Vipur Barbabas was walking home from a ministry meeting. The next minute he was fighting for his life, unarmed, against a man wielding a machete. The man, a Hindu extremist, hid behind a bush, waiting for his target – the 46 year old house-church pastor from Madhya Pradesh. Once, twice ... five times the vicious blade came down. The pastor was unable to fend off the brutal blows. Miraculously, Vipur managed to get away and limp home. His wife and friends rushed him to a local hospital, but everyone, including Vipur, feared the worst. The far-right Hindu nationalist movement in India seeks to wipe out any religious expression, including Christianity, that falls outside of the Hindu faith. The movement's mission is to make India a complete Hindu nation by 2021. This movement has created a culture war and made it very dangerous and difficult for many Christians living in the region who are often forced out of villages, beaten and arrested for believing in Jesus. (Mk. 13:9)

##### **The Persecution:**

For Vipur, his wife, and the couple's three teens, persecution for their Christian faith is all too real in their home state, where 90.9 percent of the 75 million residents follow Hinduism, according to the 2011 Census. Hindu extremists regularly and brutally target Christians in the large central Indian state nicknamed the “Heart of India.” Vipur has been beaten before. But instead of giving up his ministry, leaving his village or hiding himself and his family in seclusion. Vipur chooses to press on despite the growing persecution against Christians. He leads several house churches. Of the 60 members of Vipur's house church movement, 40 were baptized. The others, he shares are still “getting to know Jesus.” However, the violence and threats against Vipur and his family have strengthened, not dampen, his passion to share the gospel. That's what God tells me to do: “to stay and be strong,” he says. Besides, I can't run. What's the point of fleeing?

**Wherever I go to serve the Lord, persecution waits for me. (Mt. 13:9)**

##### **The Violence Increasing In India:**

Persecution against Christians in India rose by over 40 percent in the first half of 2020, despite a 3 month, nationwide lock down, according to a recent poll. “Hate crimes against Christians in India have risen by an alarming 40.87 percent,” the poll indicated. The increase came despite a complete nationwide lock down that lasted 3 months to stem the spread of Covid-19 infections. (Mt. 23:34-37) **Pray for the believers in India!**

## **The Testimony Of Vipur Barnabas:**

The attacks are not the only times God has saved the house-church leader's life. A painful illness and a devoted friend led Vipur to leave Hinduism and follow Christ in 2000. "My wife was pregnant with our second girl when I got sick," he says. "I went to many doctors, and they gave me all kinds of advice: 'Do this. 'Do that.' But nothing helped. I started going to witch doctors, but the suffering only increased." (Mt 5:10)

## **Enter Vipur's Barnabas:**

Like Barnabas who came alongside the Apostle Paul after his personal Damascus Road conversion, one of Vipur's old friends had heard about his illness and set out to find him. "This man shared with me how Jesus had changed his life and how Jesus wanted to help me too," Vipur remembers. "I didn't believe a word he was saying. I just thought he was trying to comfort me. Besides, I probably didn't understand half of what he was saying. I was in too much pain to listen. Each week, Vipur's friend returned and prayed for him. Each time he prayed. Vipur says he felt a little better. He started to listen more to his friend about this Jesus that he had found. Then I was compelled to discover more, Vipur went with his friend to a worship service at a church where the pastor prayed for him. Something kept drawing him back, again and again. I kept visiting that service, and after 6 months I was completely healed," he says. Vipur's healing was the final that Vipur needed to turn from the religion he has grown up in all his life and follow Jesus. He was even baptized in a Christian church. **(Please pray for the church in India)** (Mt. 10:21)

## **Criticized And Ostracized:**

Becoming one of a hated minority of faith didn't make for an easy life. Vipur's wife left him and took their two young daughters with her. His family shunned him. When a Hindu converts to Christianity, family members criticize and often ostracize their loved one. Christian converts face societal pressure not only from family, friends community members and local Hindu priests, but also from radical Hindus. "Everybody I knew and had good relationships with stopped talking to me," Vipur says. "I told Jesus, first, you saved me, but now everyone (has) stopped talking to me. I have no family or friends. Why did you even save me"? Vipur also voiced his frustration with his new found Savior yet he still cried out for comfort, reading Scripture and praying daily. He admits he was angry at his wife for leaving, but also prayed for her return. His prayer was answered when one day, unexpectedly, she and the children came home. My wife said, "Whatever your religion is, I will follow you." Eventually, she grew genuinely interested in Christianity, and after about 6 months she wanted to be baptized too, despite the wishes of our families." The social isolation continued when his wife's family disowned her to leave Hinduism and trust." **(Please pray for the Christians of India)** (Ps. 31:15)

**Pray For Yipurs Barabas! He begs for the prayers of other Christians.** "Please pray for me," he says. "Pray that I recover fully. "I want to be able to do what I did before the attack." Please pray for Vipur and his family as they face ongoing violence, discrimination and social pressures.