

Grace to You :: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

Interview with Gladys Staines, A Missionary to India

Selected Scriptures

GTY69

JOHN MacARTHUR: Can you hear me, Gladys?

GLADYS STAINES: Yes, I can...I can hear you, yes.

JOHN: Well good, it's a real joy and privilege to have an opportunity to talk with you. Thank you so much for being willing to do this.

Well listen, we heard a week ago, over a week ago about the tragic death of your husband and your two boys and our whole church, all of us even though we don't know the family have really been concerned and desire to pray for you. I know this is a very, very challenging and difficult time.

We were grateful for the partnership we had with you by being able to minister to you through the cassette tapes and we thought it might be good to share a little of your story with our radio family so that they could pray for you in this very, very difficult time. So thank you for agreeing to do that.

Give us a little bit of a description of what occurred in the death of your husband and your two sons on January 24?

GLADYS: Well, of course, I wasn't present at the site, but I heard that on the evening of twenty-second, twenty-third night after they had gone to bed about ten o'clock, after the normal program for the camps, they had this great noise and crowd of people came racing into the village and it seemed that they had blocked off the...the entrances to the houses and the village and all the exist points so that nobody could come out. And then they started breaking the...breaking the windows or something. I don't know exactly, the stones were thrown and then windows are broken and then at some stage they set the two birch(?) seats(??) lot(???) (probably the vehicle) in which my husband...well one of them which my husband and two sons were in...

JOHN: So, it was a sort of an attack against the Christian camp itself.

GLADYS: Well I don't believe it was totally against the Christian camp as such because no...they didn't enter the camping area at all...

JOHN: They didn't.

GLADYS: They just...they found the activities to the two vehicles and to my family. But I'm thankful that nobody from the camp was injured at all. One of our people tried to go out to help my husband

but he was beaten so he had to retreat and single-handedly he had no chance against a crowd of approximately 60 people armed with sticks and everything else. So they could have entered the camp area because the camp is... held most of the people who come to the camp will stay in the houses of those who are Christians, but also they wanted to...you cannot be protected there. I mean, you cannot be...you cannot be accommodated there, then held in thatched, very temporary thatched houses.

JOHN: I see.

GLADYS: Not houses, just shelters. So, I mean, if they had have entered that area and set that alive(??), it would have caused tremendous damage and maybe tremendous loss of lives.

JOHN: Well, and the Lord protected those folks and that's wonderful.

GLADYS: Yes, He did indeed.

JOHN: So your husband and your sons were actually sleeping the night in their car because they didn't have another accommodation.

GLADYS: Well that's...that is what they have done every year for the past fourteen years because my children, of course, they...this is only the second year that my oldest son had went and the first year that my smallest son had gone. And I did not go with my daughter because there's not enough accommodations, so they were just going to go together and have fun together as father and sons.

JOHN: Oh my. Well tell me, Gladys, a little bit about your family. I'd like to know about your boys and about Esther. What were their ages and?

GLADYS: Well Esther is thirteen. Philip was ten and Timothy was six.

JOHN: My, just young little boys. And as you said, they were gone to camp with their dad for a father-son time when all this happened.

Well, heaven must seem much more precious to you these days now that...

GLADYS: It certainly is...heavenly.

JOHN: Yeah, now that those that you love are there.

JOHN: Tell us a little bit, Gladys, about back in 1965, I think it was, when you came to India, tell us where you came from and what your anticipation and ministry...anticipation of ministry was and what it's turned out to be through these years.

GLADYS: Well, maybe I need to clarify something. I was still in high school in 1965.

JOHN: (Chuckle) Okay.

GLADYS: But my husband, but Graham came out in 1965 at the age of 24 years. He had actually been...felt a call to the Lord for this type of missionary service from the time he was fifteen or sixteen in some Christian endeavor ??? that was held in his community.

JOHN: And that was in Australia.

GLADYS: That was in Australia.

JOHN: Yeah.

GLADYS: So he was very keen to work for the Lord to do His will, whatever God wanted he was ready to do. So he actually, after several...several years, well at the age of 24 after two years attending Bible college, he knew that God wanted him somewhere. He had heard about this working in ???? district with the leprosy patients and also the other church-related activities. And so he came out...he came out at the age of 24 and on his 24th birthday he arrived, so he had just completed 34 years on the 18th of January.

JOHN: Oh my. And so...

GLADYS: We had actually celebrated that together as a family, a lovely time we had together on the eighteenth, that was five days before that. Well only four days before this happened. So exactly...I can't tell you much more about that because I did not come until after marriage, until 1893...I mean, 1993.

JOHN: So it was almost twenty years later that you were married to him.

GLADYS: Well almost, yes.

JOHN: Eighteen years later. And then you came and joined him and did he continue that...the ministry to the leprosy patients through all these years?

GLADYS: Well he wasn't fully involved with the leprosy work up until that time, he had been..he had been relieving as necessary. There were two...there was one other lady who was...had the responsibility, but he had relieved and ? the work. And this other lady, Miss Oliver Okon(?), she eventually had to return to Australia following...with cancer.

JOHN: I see.

GLADYS: So in 1984 he actually fully took over the work of the leprosy farm. Maybe I should explain the work of the leprosy farm?

JOHN: Please do.

GLADYS: It is actually was donated by the Maharajah in...around 1895-96. And it was originally

started as a leprosy-beggars camp and then it was moved out into what was then the outskirts of the town. But whatever treatment was available they were giving to them. But, of course, the treatment, full treatment didn't become available until the early 1990's. So from that time on they've been treating the patients with the full treatment of drugs and they are completely curable within two years.

JOHN: Boy, that's wonderful. How does that disease transmit itself? How do they...how do they contract leprosy?

GLADYS: Well it's a...it's mostly by personal contact, particularly where you have people, you know, children and adults touching each other, this is common. That is one...that is the main way.

JOHN: And the symptoms, of course, that it begins to kill the nerves so that they...they lose their feeling and then that leads to them really destroying their own physical bodies because they can't feel what they're doing.

GLADYS: Well there are several...several grades of leprosy actually. There's the one type protects the nerves more, and one type comes out in skin lesions, but eventually it all attacks the nerves so they lose their feeling and then they get sores because they don't...not aware that they're touching something hot or they're not aware they've walked on a stone or cut their foot. So, we have to teach them that once they have this nerve damage that they have to govern themselves very carefully to make sure that the...if they have any ??? ???? even though it's not paining(?)

JOHN: What is...what is the full nature of the ministry? I know a part of it would be medical but I'm sure the spiritual aspect of what you and your husband have done is the priority. Tell us a little about that.

GLADYS: We have the services at the leprosy home, Sunday services, and at the rehabilitation farm that we also have. Over the years a number of churches have commenced since they've heard the gospel preached. And mostly that has been done through word of...I mean there are some initial camps where people first heard the gospel and through selling the Literature Bibles translation and all this sort of thing.

JOHN: What kind of a community is Barepodah(?), is that how you say it? The town you're in.

GLADYS: Bahrepodah, I think is the correct pronunciation.

JOHN: Yeah, what kind of...what kind of community is that? Small or large town or city?

GLADYS: Well, it's small...it's small for India but then it would be large in the west, it's a hundred-thousand people approximately.

JOHN: And what would a...what would a typical day be like for say you and your husband, if there is such a thing as a typical day...in terms of what you would be engaged in?

GLADYS: Graham was...used to go out to the leprosy home for two or three hours three times a week because it was mostly administration he was doing and some...I mean, administration

means...it covers a wide, wide area.

JOHN: Sure.

GLADYS: He also...to the needs of the patients and gave directions for the people who were working. And then he would come back and fix up the accounts and books in relation to that and then he would often have to go off to daily various office government and ? private offices in relation to the leprosy home like the replacement of water tanking...water tank leaks and oh many things in relation to land and all that sort of thing. Then after lunch he would try to get some rest because in here you need to rest in the middle of the day so you can survive.

JOHN: Yes, I've been there, I understand that.

GLADYS: Yeah, and then in the afternoon he would try to do some book work. Sometimes we did some visiting of just the houses, community, just friends around, but that was very rare these days. But we also had people come in from the villages, they'd go to the doctor and come back and stay with us. So many people came for various reasons, from the...where the churches are in the community, in the villages.

JOHN: Sure, so there was a lot of personal ministry that you were carrying on day in and day out.

GLADYS: Oh, with his personal ministry definitely, and of more lately that's basically what it was.

JOHN: I don't...

GLADYS: And then sometimes we'd get to visit the church...some of the churches in the villages, but not so much, unfortunately.

JOHN: A bit of a perspective, you know, in Matthew chapter 5 Jesus said, "Blessed are you when men persecute you and when they persecute you, of course, for righteousness' sake." In Matthew 12 Jesus said, "The servant is not above his lord," meaning that if..the way they treat the Lord is the way they're going to treat His servants. And then in John 16 He said that they're going to persecute you and the time will come when men will believe that they serve God in taking your life. He said...He said that in the world you will have tribulation. Second Timothy says, "All who live godly will suffer persecution."

We in the west, we hear all these Bible verses and we understand that, as Peter said, when you suffer for righteousness' sake the Spirit of grace and glory rests on you. And all of those indications of the blessedness and the somewhat inevitability of persecution coming against those who are faithful to Christ, we know that scripturally. But it seems far away, it seems distant to us. Statistically we're reading today that there are more Christians being martyred today than at any time in the history of the church. For those in America and western Europe, that just seems really not to be a reality, but when we look at the world outside of the west, Christianity is being persecuted on a wider scale than ever. And it is true that thousands of Christians every year are losing their lives in environments all...all across this world. And this brings it really home when it happens to somebody specific and when it comes right down to your family. And I'm sure that your...your husband back in 1965 when he decided to go to India realized the implications, realized the price that could be paid,

realized, of course, the challenges, the difficulty. I know your...

GLADYS: Oh I'm sure he did...I'm sure he did.

JOHN: Your home is near Calcutta.

GLADYS: Well it's 250 kilometers southwest of Calcutta.

JOHN: Right, and I've been in that area. Just the difficulty of...of living, the heat, the uniqueness of that culture and you realize you're stepping in to an environment that is, religiously very, very different than Christianity and that in itself is a great challenge. What has been the response from...from the government to this tragedy, to this incident?

GLADYS: Well, I have not read all of the papers, so I can only comment on what I know locally and certainly the local authorities have been a 100 percent supportive and been working overtime into...in all of this situation to do what has to be done. The extent...the other part of the government, I cannot comment on that because I have had some letters of condolences from various people, but I'm not following the news and I'm not following all of these things at the moment because I don't...well, I just haven't....

JOHN: I...I understand that. What has been the response of the Christian community there in your area and around India?

GLADYS: It has sent them to their knees. It has caused many people to pray, many people to be shaken out of their sleep. This is what people have said, "I've been shaken out of my sleep." So I think it's awakened the Christian church and it certainly...certainly there have been large, large prayer meetings held all over the country, from what I have had reports of from the telephone calls and various other reports like that. So...but the local Christians, it is also been a time of shaking for them and they need not to pray that they will be...stand strong and serve in this time of difficulty for them. But they're ready to continue.

JOHN: Well, it's a tremendous shaking because you realize that what you fear has become a reality and it does tend to shake you out of your apathy and let you know that there is indeed a spiritual conflict of a high level with a tremendous...

GLADYS: Definitely.

JOHN: With tremendous potential consequences and it's not for the faint of heart to be engaged in that kind of ministry.

Gladys, I don't know how you approach it in your own heart, but I'm sure the folks who hear this interview would love to know from you, where are you finding your strength at this time? Where are you finding the sustenance? Obviously the loss is immense, immeasurable from the human standpoint, where have you turned and where have you found your strength?

GLADYS: My strength has been in God alone. It's only He who has given me the strength to carry

on. Of course, many people have also come and supported me and told me that they had been praying. I have a number of people around me all the time who have just been very practical in the way they've helped because, you see, the problem is I've had to take on much of my husband's work just suddenly, not knowing exactly where everything is. But many people are giving me the practical support. The Christians in the community have also given very practical support and supplied meals and praying together in that. But certainly my strength has been from God.

JOHN: Are you receiving support from churches back in your...in Australia?

GLADYS: Well it's not so much from churches, it's some from churches but mostly from individual supporters.

JOHN: I see. So your support will carry on and you'll be able to be all right from that standpoint? You're at this point trying to decide what your future is, I'm sure, and whether you're going to stay with your daughter and continue on in that ministry, or just what the Lord would have for you. I'm sure you're in the midst of deciding all of that. We certainly want to be praying that the Lord will give you great direction in that.

GLADYS: Well at the present...present way I have expressed my desire to stay here and continue. Actually, I..to even get up and leave, it just has not even occurred to me once.

JOHN: Oh that's wonderful.

GLADYS: Because I just feel that this is where God has called me and many people have expressed they're really pleased in ??? We're here, you are our people, you are ours, we're here to help you. From every...every area of the community especially in that report....

JOHN: And that would be from...that would be from the national people, the Indian people themselves.

GLADYS: They're from the national people actually. There are no other missionaries in our area, we're the only...the only ones who are not national here in this area. So our full support from those other churches and the people are the Indian people themselves, the people who are living here. We just trust God to provide what is needed when it is needed and He has faithfully provided all down through these hundred years of the mission. So I have every confidence He's not going to leave us now.

JOHN: Since 1896, right?

GLADYS: Yes, 1895 I think the mission started itself.

JOHN: How did you become acquainted with our ministry, Grace To India? I think it was in 1985.

GLADYS: Actually I think through...??? had sent some information, I think you were in the same building or something as them in Bombay at some stage.

JOHN: That's exactly right. So you started then to receive some of the cassettes from our tape library over there?

GLADYS: Yes I did. Yes I did.

JOHN: We're very grateful for the opportunity to have a little share in your life through our Grace To India tape ministry and we hope that that was a help and an encouragement to your husband and will continue to be as those resources are continually available to you.

How can we best pray for you?

GLADYS: Just pray for daily strength at the moment, to...just to know what to do, what not to do and who to face and who not to face.

JOHN: Oh, I know.

GLADYS: And just wisdom for the..trying to work out all these accounts and finances that have fallen upon me.

JOHN: All those things they don't tell you when you're training for missionary work...all those details...

GLADYS: Well I used to help my husband a little bit in that, but actually I was...my ministry has just been in the home as mother, boss and mother and managing the house with this stuff that we have.

JOHN: Well, and that's where...

GLADYS: I have not thoroughly been involved in this...in Graham's work. I mean, I would accompany him from time to time but and, of course, support him in practical ways and being one with him in this...but...

JOHN: Well, Gladys, that's the way it should be. I'm a great believer that that's what God's design is, that the man is called in ministry and the wife is called to the man and to the family. And so you have fulfilled that.

What would you...what would you say to some young person considering mission work even in India who might, you know, wonder about these kinds of things? What would you say to them?

GLADYS: I would say make very sure of your call from God. And once you are sure of that then just be prepared for whatever, even if it costs you loss. We must learn to not...not to hang on to our own lives, we must learn to allow God to use us and to...and He will use us, He only gives us strength day by day, He does enough just to strength me on that. So if the Lord has called them and they're sure of their call, then...then don't stay at home.

JOHN: Thank you, Gladys. It's just a real joy to talk with you. We grieve with you over the loss of your husband, Graham, and the loss of your two sons, Philip and Timothy. The tragedy is immense

in your life but your faith is obviously strong and the grace of God is very evident in your life. We're going to pray for you, for thirteen-year-old Esther and for the future ministry that God is going to give you right there in India...right in the very place where your husband lost his life. So our love to you and to your daughter, and to all those in the faith around you and be assured of our prayers. Thank you, Gladys.

GLADYS: Thank you very much. Thank you.

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