

PRISONERS OF faith

Manja Tamang Country: Nepal

Falsely accused of a crime he didn't commit, Manja Tamang is currently serving a 20 year sentence in a Nepali prison. Accused of murder, yet declared innocent by the victim's wife, his mission field has moved from the streets and villages to prison cells.

In 2000, Manja Tamang, a missionary serving with Gospel For Asia, had been traveling and involved in evangelism when he discovered a dead body close to a river. He reported the sighting to the police. Some locals, opposed to Manja's evangelistic ministry, became aware of the situation and saw it as an ideal opportunity to have the evangelist arrested. A few days later, the police arrested and charged him for what they determined was a murder. They gathered 'evidence' from his home—clothing they claimed belonged to the victim. During Manja's trial a number of false witnesses came forward to testify against him. Although the victim's widow protested, saying that Manja was innocent, the court delivered a guilty verdict and sentenced him to twenty years.

Manja's supporters fought the conviction for two years, and eventually his case went before the Supreme Court. In spite of very strong evidence proving Manja's innocence, the court upheld the original sentence and Manja remains in prison. However those who falsely accused Manja, hoping to put an end to his ministry, have not been successful. Though wrongfully imprisoned, Manja chooses to trust God and holds no bitterness. *'Injustice, false accusation and suffering are part of the Christian life,'* he said. *'That's what I see in the teaching of the Lord Jesus, as his follower. The Apostle Paul counted it joy to suffer for Christ unjustly, and it is no less than that for me.'*

Believing that God is sovereign and that he has been given the privilege of serving God in prison, Manja

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EMAIL ALERT
for prayer & action
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remains steadfast in his passion to share the Gospel. He regularly meets for worship with cellmates he led to Christ. More than thirty-five prisoners have become Christians. Prison wardens impressed with Manja's character have appointed him as a prison medical assistant.

Rati, Manja's wife, continues her husband's ministry by serving on an outreach team, helping with children's ministry and is involved in training other Christian women. There are days when Rati feels the loneliness of being separated from her husband but she believes that God has blessed her family and, together with her two children, she looks forward to the day when her husband will be released.

PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ For the Lord to bring about Manja's release
- ▶ For continued strength and comfort for Rati as she reaches out to women and children
- ▶ For wisdom for those involved in negotiating on Manja's behalf

'But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him'
Acts 12:5

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THE VOICE OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Hebrews 13:3 'Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow-prisoners, and those who are ill-treated as if you yourselves were suffering'

Nepal is currently in transition to democracy and elections for a constituent assembly will be held on 10 April 2008. The democratically elected constitutional body, or constituent assembly, will then decide the country's future by devising a new constitution. This process of political and constitutional reform may bring changes to the judicial system.

Because negotiations are ongoing, **we have been asked not to write to the authorities concerning Manja Tamang's case**. At this time we would simply ask if you would pray for the nation of Nepal and for the Nepali peoples. Below is some background information to fuel your prayers together with a short sample prayer on behalf of brother Manja and family.

Nepal

Previously the world's only Hindu kingdom, Nepal is home to many diverse cultural groups including Muslims, Buddhists, and animists. Nepal moved to multi-party democracy in 1991, changing from an absolute to constitutional monarchy. Maoist rebels have sparked political unrest and violence across the country since 1996. The massacre of the royal family in 2001 increased the instability and crushed the hopes of many people in Nepal. In early 2004 the monarchy reclaimed absolute power, but in 2006 the king stood down under public and political pressure. Nepal has now been declared a secular democracy, and an interim government is charged with holding elections for a constituent assembly.

Nepal is 85 percent Hindu with Hinduism recognized as Nepal's official religion. Nepal's Christian minority makes up approximately 2% of the population. The Church in Nepal has flourished in the midst of pressure as a remarkable indigenous movement. It has grown in numbers, diversity and maturity. Prior to 1990, believers were routinely imprisoned for having converted or for evangelizing. Official persecution ended with the change in government, but pressure and restrictions continue in many areas, especially where the church is enjoying rapid growth. Churches are increasingly responding to our Lord's commission and taking the Gospel to unreached groups. It is still illegal to proselytize, and in some areas churches also face persecution from the Maoists.

'Dear Father,

We thank you for your great grace, love and mercy and we want to lift up the nation of Nepal to you today. We ask Father God, that you bless all the peoples of Nepal. We ask that you give wisdom to those in positions of authority and influence. We pray for lasting peace between the different political factions in this country, for prosperity and stability, and that the Nepalese Church will be a great blessing and help to their country.

In particular Father we lift up our brother Manja. We pray for his dear wife Rati and their two children, that they would know your comfort, strength and blessing. Father we ask you to give them the desires of their heart by reuniting them with their precious husband and father. We pray that any negotiations on Manja's behalf will fall on sympathetic ears and that he will be exonerated and released in the near future. In the meantime we ask that you keep him in good health and enable him to live out his faith boldly with joy and compassion. Help him to know that he is precious to you, loved by you, and that nothing can separate him from your great love.

We ask all these things in the name of your Son, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.'

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