

A Powerful witness in the funeral of the Turkish Martyrs

On Wednesday April 18, 2007, the fledgling Christian community in this nation of 70 million Muslims, suffered a devastating blow, when three of its finest, were brutally murdered for their faith. One German and two Turkish brothers were found in the print shop, in south central Turkey, where they published and sold Bibles. They had been tortured, stabbed repeatedly, and bound with their throats slit. Sadly, it was at the hands of five trusted young men, who had claimed to be seekers of our LORD. The murder was skillfully pre-meditated and ruthlessly carried out. Needless to say, as members of the Body, we have been deeply grieved by this terrible tragedy. Yet, what appeared to be a victory for the enemy has since resulted in the most OPEN DECLARATION of the GOSPEL this nation has seen since the Apostle Paul! Therefore, we rejoice that not one drop of blood shed by these dear saints has fallen to the ground in vain.

April 21st, approximately 500 believers gathered in a demonstration of solidarity, to honor the lives of these colleagues. Despite the heavy police and media coverage in a country that is 99.9% Muslim, each of us had determined that it was worth the risk and exposure, to stand together for our LORD. After all, it seemed a small sacrifice, compared to the loss experienced by the wives, children and fiancé of the deceased.

What we witnessed has FOREVER changed our lives! As the body was carried into the courtyard, high upon the shoulders of our Turkish brothers, spontaneous applause burst forth! I leaned over to my national friend and queried, "Is this normal for funerals, in your culture?" "No," he asserted, "it's because he's a martyr!" As the casket continued its journey toward the front, ethereally beautiful worship music erupted-somewhat reminiscent of a Gregorian chant. Then everyone joined together in the singing of Turkish praise songs.

However, what followed nearly took our breath away! Approximately ten [Christian] Turkish leaders proclaimed openly the GOSPEL in front of television cameras, newspaper reporters, police officials, the Deputy Governor of Izmir and several other important officials. FEARLESSLY, yet with GENTLE STRENGTH each shared his faith in CHRIST, and HIS FORGIVENESS of those who had committed the heinous murders! Additionally, they shared that CHRIST had won the VICTORY, and at this very hour the martyrs were standing before the very throne of GOD! Several mentioned that the lives of these men were perhaps the seeds that must be planted in order for a harvest to come forth. One pastor passionately exclaimed, "We will spread this message, God's Word, because we are children of the Word! You may kill us all, but we will spread this message, because we love you and because Jesus loves you! We forgive the attackers, because we too, have been

forgiven." Powerful applause, "Amens" and "Hallelujahs" erupted from among the scores of nationalities represented there! It was awesome!

However, what happened next.....can ONLY be explained by the SUPERNATURAL LOVE and STRENGTH that GOD ALONE can give. Spontaneously, in an unplanned moment-- Necati's wife asked if she could speak. "Amid her tears she spoke of her forgiveness of the very men who had tortured and killed her precious husband, and the father of her children! In an emotion filled voice, she asserted: "I know my Necati was praying for them, even while he was being tortured." She also spoke of the wonderful love they shared as a family and their joy in serving the LORD together. Lastly, she stated "I loved my husband very, very much---but, I love my Jesus even more. And that is how I can face tomorrow." Again thunderous applause burst forth! We were spell bound!

In the closing moments of this incredible service, one of the pastors shouted "Afferin Necati!!! Afferin Tilman!!! Afferin Ugur!!!---Which translated means--- "Well done Necati!! Well done Tilman!! Well done Ugur!! We are certain the LORD echoed those same sentiments, as he received those precious men into HIS heavenly kingdom!!! Then, as Necati's body was lovingly ushered onward to its final resting place, applause and praise resonated throughout the garden! As we looked up, we noticed that the media stood utterly dumbfounded! We were quite certain they had NEVER witnessed anything like this before. Yet, as believers we knew we had been in the very presence of the LORD! It seemed as if we had observed church history in the very making. Most importantly, we believe that the precious blood of these saints was NOT shed in vain, but will be used to further GOD'S KINGDOM in a manner that has not occurred since the time of the apostles! So let it be written--- so let it be done!!!!!!

1 Peter 4:12-16 (NASB95)

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

¹⁴ If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; ¹⁶ but if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.