

# THEY WERE PUT TO DEATH.

**September 02, 2007.**

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## **Introduction.**

*Psa.116:15* says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones." *Rev.14:13* says, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." The title I have chosen for today's sermon is found in *Heb.11:37*. **Hebrews chap.11** gives us an incomplete list of the men and women of faith who lived faithfully before God in all kinds of circumstances. The writer spoke of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Sarah and Rahab. In *vs.32* the writer felt he had made his point and asked, "what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets."

The writer proceeded to summarize the many heroic acts of faith carried out faithfully by unnamed men and women of God in the face of all kinds of difficulties, sufferings and death. In *vs.37* he wrote, "They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated." I stated that the writer gave us an incomplete list. The list did not end with the Old Testament. The list did not end with the death of the apostles and the thousands of early Christians who died because of religious and / or political persecutions. In the last twenty centuries, thousands upon thousands of names have been added to the list. On the evening of **Wednesday, August 29, 2007**, Pastor Arif Khan and his beloved wife, Kathy Khan, were added to that list. They were put to death with guns.

This morning I will not deal with the details of the events related to the murders of the Khans. I am sure you are well aware of the details, the slanderous charges that were

made and the contradictions that surfaced in the press stories. There is, however, a final judgment coming when all wrongs would be made right.

When Jim Elliot and his friends were murdered by the Auca Indians in the Amazon jungle, the world described what happened as a waste of precious lives that could have been more productive in their own homeland. I am sure there are those who will describe the Khans as foolish for risking their lives as missionaries in Pakistan. But what does the word of God have to say to us?

### **The Call Of God.**

Arif Khan was a Christian who lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He fully understood and embraced what Christ's Lordship over him meant. He didn't run from Christ's Lordship and its application to his life. From the day the Lord saved Pastor Khan, he knew that he must preach the gospel to Islamic nations in general and to Pakistan in particular. He loved Pakistan dearly. He loved his people dearly. He knew the risks involved and embraced those risks with heart and soul, while entrusting himself to the Lord's wise and gracious dealings with him. When Kathy married Arif, she knowingly embraced all that he embraced with godly devotion.

Was Arif foolish to go and live with his wife in Pakistan, knowing all the dangers he would face? Was he a man with a death wish who unnecessarily endangered his wife and, at one stage, his young children? Did Arif waste his life? If Arif was foolish, then we would have to say that the apostles were also foolish with Paul being the most foolish among them. We would have to say that the thousands of men and women who endured great suffering and even death to take the gospel to others were foolish. We would have to say that the thousands upon thousands, both young and old, who died refusing to deny the faith were also foolish.

Paul knew what the world thought of him. But he also knew what some professed Christians in Corinth thought of him. And so he wrote in *1Cor.4:10*, “We are fools for Christ’s sake.” And then he added in *vss.11-13*, “To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things.” Paul knew what it meant to be regarded as a fool for Christ’s sake, as a man with a brilliant future in Judaism who was now wasting his life. He knew about the hardships and dangers that came in being a fool for Christ. Arif was not the first to be murdered and slandered. The Lord Jesus was the first to be murdered and slandered. Paul knew what it was to be slandered again and again. And in the end he would also be martyred.

There is hardly a true minister of the gospel that you can find in history and in our world today who has not had to make worldly sacrifices in order to serve Christ and reach lost men and women with the gospel. At some point or the other, each true minister of the gospel has been regarded as a fool and / or proclaimed to be a fool because of the choices and sacrifices they made.

Regardless of the world’s opinion, as a minister of the gospel Arif was not a fool. He was a godly and wise man who made the wise choice to live his life according to God’s will and wisdom. Paul wrote in *Eph.5:15-17*, “Therefore, be careful how you walk (**conduct your life**), not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Note that : it is not the foolish but the wise Christian who understands what the will of the Lord is and conducts his / her life as a wise person, that is, according to the will of the Lord.

The wise man exhorted us in *Prov.3:5-7*, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the

Lord and turn away from evil.” The wise Christian’s trust is in the Lord and in the Lord’s wisdom and not in himself.

Arif and Kathy did not waste their lives. They lived fulfilled lives to the glory of God. They knew the will of God for them. They submitted themselves obediently to the will of God despite the many obvious dangers they would be facing. They can say with their Lord, *“We have glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given us to do.”* (cf. *Jn.17:4*). The final verdict on their lives would not come from this world nor even from Christians with little understanding of the God they are serving. The final verdict will come from the Lord Jesus Christ. The Khans lived godly. They lived faithfully. They obeyed God’s call upon their lives and proved their faithfulness to that call with their spilled blood. The Lord’s verdict will be, *“Well done, good and faithful servants.”* (cf. *Matt.25:21*).

Let me ask you as I close this point : do you truly understand what Christ’s Lordship over you means? Have you taken the time to work through, think through and meditate upon what Christ’s Lordship over you means? Have you embraced Christ’s Lordship over you? If you have not, what right do you have to call yourself a Christian? Do you know God’s will for your life? Are you living your life with godly wisdom in keeping with the will of God? The world will say you are a fool because God’s revealed wisdom in His word will lead you to make decisions that will contradict the wisdom of the world. Are you prepared to embrace the label, *“I am a fool for Christ’s sake”*, because you have embraced and submitted yourself to God’s will and wisdom? Are you prepared to submit yourself to the world’s verdict that you are wasting your life because you are obeying God and submitting yourself to His will for your life? What verdict will you hear from the Lord on that final day when you stand before Him?

## How Should You Respond?

The murder of Arif & Kathy Khan is brutal and shocking. It was perpetrated by means of the worst kind of deceit that would have entrapped any Christian, far more a man devoted to reaching sinners with the gospel. As Christians, how should we respond to this seemingly senseless brutal murder?

**Firstly, we should respond with grief.** The **primary** focus of our grief should be over sin and the consequences of sin in this world. In *Gen.6:5-6* we have a brief description of man's great wickedness in Noah's day and the declaration, "[The Lord] was grieved in His heart." In *Gen.26:35* we are told that Esau's rebellious lifestyle brought grief to his parents, Isaac and Rebekah. In *1Sam.15:35* we are told that Samuel grieved over King Saul's moral folly. *Prov.10:1* says a morally foolish son is a grief to his mother. *Prov.17:25* says a morally foolish son is a grief to his father. In *Psa.119:136* the psalmist said, "My eyes shed streams of water, because they do not keep Your law." In *Mk.3:5* we see Jesus grieved at the hardness of the hearts of fallen men.

The grief described here is a daily ongoing grief we should have in our hearts. We see sin and its consequences on a daily basis in the newspapers, on the TV, on the roads, in our jobs, in our neighborhoods, in our homes and in our personal lives. Whether you see sin and its consequences in your heart and in your actions or in others, sin should make you grieve. On the other hand the presence of sin and its consequences in your heart and actions do not mean that you cannot grieve, rebuke and correct when you see sin in others. That is your Biblical responsibility.

The carrying out of that Biblical responsibility is evidence that you embraced what the Bible teaches about sin. It is also evidence of the growth of godliness in your heart. Others, knowing about your struggles with sin, would want to call you hypocritical when you grieve over sin, rebuke and correct sin. The real hypocrisy is in remaining quiet. Regardless of your personal struggles with sin, if sin and its consequences do not make you grieve, then they are hardening your heart. Then sin and its consequences are

making your heart callous and uncaring. And that is a very dangerous spiritual condition to be in.

The **secondary** focus of our grief must be in the death of Arif and Kathy Khan. Brethren, I want to make it clear that the Bible does not associate rejoicing and celebration with death. I am always deeply saddened when I see a funeral described as a “**celebration**”. However we may wish to justify it, the Bible does not associate death with celebration. In my view, the so-called celebration of a life in a funeral minimizes the great evil that sin is and the great tragedy of death sin has brought into this world. The Bible associates grief with death.

When Sarah died we are told that Abraham mourned for Sarah and wept for her. (*Gen.23:2*). When Jacob died, the grieving for him was described by those who looked on as “a grievous mourning.” (*Gen.50:11*). When David heard of the death of Saul and Jonathan, we are told that David and those with him “mourned and wept and fasted until evening.” (*2Sam.1:12*). And David chanted a lament for Saul and Jonathan. (*2Sam.1:17-27*). David declared, “I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan.” Despite his great wickedness towards his father, when Absalom died David was stricken with grief and cried, “O my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (*2Sam.18:33*).

When the Lord Jesus came to the grave where Lazarus was buried, we are told, “Jesus wept.” (*Jn.11:35*). The idea in the verb is that Jesus burst into tears. **Ridderbos** described Jesus as identifying with humanity and experiencing and participating in the grief of all whose loved ones have gone to the grave. When Stephen was murdered, we are told that “devout men buried Stephen, and made a loud lamentation over him.” (*Acts 8:2*). I want to join David this morning and say, *“I am deeply distressed for you, my brother Arif. I am deeply distressed for you, my sister, Kathy.”*

Does such deep Biblical grief over death contradict and cancel out the other truths in God’s word concerning death? The answer is an emphatic “**NO!**”. Paul said in

**1Thess.4:13** that we do not grieve as the rest of the world who have no hope. When you become a Christian you do not stop being a real human being. You do not stop experiencing grief, pain and loss. We have no warrant from God's word to deny our humanity and try to bring the future eternal realities into the present. It is in **Rev.21:4** that we are told that God will take away death, mourning, crying and pain. This will come **after** the final judgment.

**We grieve with hope because** we know that our all-wise gracious and holy God is in sovereign control of everything that is happening in this world. Our God did not lose control when Arif and Kathy were murdered. There are no **“oops”** with God. Just as our Lord died by **“the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23)**, so too Arif and Kathy died by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. In other words, Arif's and Kathy's death was God's will. The brutal manner of their death was also God's will. The day and time of their death was also God's will. Alan Dunn was spared being a part of this tragedy because it was not God's will for him to die. When your time comes, when your numbered days are over (**Psa.139:16**), you also will die in keeping with the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. Your death will not be a divine **“oops”**.

**We grieve with hope because** of our confidence in the divine promise given in **Rom.8:28**. Paul wrote, **“And we know that God works all things together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”** How is this death good for Arif and Kathy? I'll answer that in the next point. How is this death good for their children, for the church in Pakistan, for the training of men in Pakistan, for the spread of the gospel in Pakistan, I can only answer from God's word. We know from the promise given in **Phil.1:6** that God will use this death to perfect His church generally and more specifically, all those intimately associated with the Khans. Paul wrote, **“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

The view among many, especially among those who hated Paul, was that Paul's imprisonment was something of a disaster for the cause of the gospel. But in *Phil.1:12* Paul said that God was using his imprisonment for the greater progress of the gospel. In the same manner we can pray that the Lord would use the deaths of Arif and Kathy for the greater progress of the gospel in Pakistan and beyond. We can pray that God will use this great tragedy for the perfecting of the church in Pakistan. Four days before his death, Pastors Khan and Dunn concluded the **15th** annual pastors' conference in Pakistan. Fifty men attended the conference. We can only pray that God will move the men trained over the last fifteen years to greater zeal for the gospel in Pakistan.

**We grieve with hope because** we know that from God's perspective the good work He had begun in Arif and Kathy was completed (*Phil.1:6*) and their gospel labors for His kingdom were completed. (*2Tim.4:6-7*). In *2Tim.4:6* Paul said, "The time of my departure has come." In *vs.7* Paul knew that his ministry on earth was finished. The Khans did not know that on August 29 their ministry on earth was finished and the race they were running was completed. They didn't know that on August 29 the time of their departure had come. But the Lord knew. And at the very moment of their departure from this earth, He was waiting to welcome them into His presence, with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servants." They died brutally but they arrived safely home. Their killers destroyed their earthly tents. What their killers did not know is that they were ushering Arif and Kathy into their "building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (*2Cor.5:1*). Truly we can say of Arif and Kathy, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." (*Rev.14:13*).

**We grieve with hope because** of the promise of the resurrection. In *Jn.11:25-26* Jesus declared in the face of Lazarus' death, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die." In *1Thess.4:13-17* we have the clear promise of Christ's second coming, the resurrection of those who died in Christ and of the rapture of those who are saved but still alive. In *1Cor.15:50-57* we have the promise of Christ's return, the final destruction of death and of our being changed into an immortal and imperishable state.

In view of the great promises given, Paul exhorted us in *vs.58*, “Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”

If the enemy of our souls is able, he would murder every Christian in this world. But despite his many and varied evil works, we must remain steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing for certain that our toils in the gospel are not in vain in the Lord. Our gospel toils are never in vain because they will always produce one of two results. They are either an aroma of life or an aroma of death. (*2Cor.2:15-16*).

### **Applications.**

I want now to make a few points by way of application. *Firstly*, in the midst of grief we must not fail to give thanks to God for the life, gospel labors and gospel example of Arif and Kathy Khan. At the same time we need to ask ourselves : what kind of example are we leaving behind? Are we leaving behind the example of godly devotion to Christ and holy boldness for the gospel?

*Secondly*, the murder of Arif and Kathy brings into sharp focus the fact that suffering and dying for the cause and name of Christ didn't end in the Roman coliseum. Being a Christian means you have taken up your cross to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Being a Christian means that you have joined the martyr's roll. You may not be martyred but *Rom.8:36* assures us, “For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” The Lord Jesus assured us that every non-Christian person in this world is His enemy and your enemy. (*Jn.15:18-19*). And if persecution became official in this country tomorrow, your so-called friends would be ready to kill you.

I ask you, how ready are you to die for Christ? This is a question you children and young people must think long and hard about. This reality is not outside the realm of your years in this earth should the Lord give you the allotted 70 years of life. Slowly but surely the hatred of Christianity is manifesting itself in surprising places and growing. Are you ready to die for your faith in Christ? This is a question I have already answered for myself. But I do not want to be presumptuous and so from time to time I think about it, pray about it and reaffirm my position on this matter before the Lord.

How we need to pray for the next and coming generations that they would be faithful to the Lord if or when the great hour of testing comes upon them! We need to pray that **Rev.2:10** will be their stronghold. The Lord Jesus said to His church in Smyrna, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” At the same time we must join in and pray with the multiplied thousands of saints who endured great persecutions and / or who were martyred, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (**Rev.6:10**).

There is one more point to be added here. **Heb.13:3** says, “Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.” What is this verse saying to us? What this verse is saying to us is illustrated in **Acts 9:4** where Jesus asked the persecuting Saul, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” The Lord Jesus is the head of the body. We are all members of the body of Christ. When any Christian is persecuted, Jesus is persecuted. When any Christian is persecuted, you are also persecuted. When any Christian is ill-treated, Jesus is ill-treated and you are also ill-treated. This is why our writer said to us, “Remember the prisoners, **as though in prison with them.**” The spiritual reality is that we are in prison with them. The spiritual reality is that you are being ill-treated with them. Here is a truth we need to prayerfully meditate upon and come to grips with. Here is a truth we need to keep to the forefront of our minds.

*Thirdly*, the apostle Paul said, “We are fools for Christ’s sake.” And then he added, “we are slandered.” (1Cor.4:10, 13). Paul was speaking here as a minister of the gospel. Here is a reality pastors must live with every day. The world press has been reveling in the allegations that Arif was a rapist and adulterer. I know from experience that when it comes to pastors, few people care about the rationality of the charges being made and the presence and / or absence of proof. I know from experience how easily people stand and listen to gossip and slander about pastors and how easily they believe such gossip and slander.

Stand uncompromisingly for Biblical truth and you will step on toes and you will be slandered. Stand uncompromisingly for Biblically defined godliness and you will step on toes and you will be slandered. Confront church members with their sin and / or discipline them because you are deeply concerned for their soul’s eternal welfare and you will face the possibility of being slandered. Refuse to allow a selfishly motivated member to have his own way and push his own agenda in the church and you will be slandered. It does not matter if disgruntled and disaffected people must manufacture their lies, their lies will be told and there are untold numbers out in the world and in the church who are ready to believe such lies. Pastors live with this reality everyday. There is also another truth, and that is : there are a great number of crooked pastors in world and their presence often make it difficult for the people of God to defend true and faithful pastors when they are being attacked and slandered.

As a pastor I live with the reality every day that my integrity is always on the line. I have dealt with matters that seem so unreal, people respond with, “*you’ve got to be joking. That can’t be true!*” I have known Paul’s reality of having to argue for and defend my integrity before people who ought to know better. And so, as ministers of the gospel we must, with prayerful wisdom, take every precaution to protect ourselves. But the very nature of our job puts us on the very frontline of danger. A man calls you and says he is ready to repent of his sins. You would not turn him away and you would not expect him to lie in order to murder you. If we try to pre-empt every danger, we would have to leave

the ministry. And so, our trust must be in the Lord and His final vindication on the final day.

In the meantime, regardless of what the slanderers say, true and faithful pastors must seek to conduct their lives conscientiously with Biblical integrity. We must be able to say with Paul day after day, “Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.” (*Acts 23:1*). In *Acts 24:16* Paul said, “I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.” In *2Cor.1:12* Paul wrote, “the testimony of our conscience [is] that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.”

There is one fact I want you to know as I close this point : slander is a violation against the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder.” (*Exod.20:13*). The intent of slander is to destroy a man’s name and reputation. You can’t murder the man so you do the next worst thing you can do, you slander him. This is why listening to slander and gossip is so dangerous. The listener becomes party to the slanderer’s violation of the sixth commandment.

*Lastly*, the murder of Arif and Kathy means that the laborers in the harvest have become fewer. Based on what I know firsthand, I want to say that true and faithful ministers of the gospel are becoming the endangered species in the world. In every country that persecutes Christians, pastors are the primary targets for beatings, imprisonments and death. The simple belief is that if you kill the shepherd, the sheep will be scattered and the gathered church will cease to exist. (*Matt.26:31*). Satan and his cohorts have pastors in their gun sights every moment of every day.

Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” (*Matt.9:37*). We live in a world in which the workers are becoming fewer and fewer because they are the primary targets of the haters of Christianity. And so, the question the Lord asked in *Isa.6:8*, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?”, is more relevant and pressing

than ever. The day is not far when the persecuted church will need equipped and trained Aquilas and Priscillas to lead house churches. Are you preparing yourself to become an Aquila and Priscilla team for the church and the glory of the Lord?

My earnest prayer is that the Lord will raise up many in His church to answer His call, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?”. But at the same time, what can I promise you if you heed that call. All I can promise you is what the Holy Spirit promised Paul, that bonds and afflictions await him in every city. (*Acts 20:23*). As you know, affliction is ***thlipsis***, the pressure that crushes. All I can promise you is what the Khans got, the bullets that ushered them safely home.

You may be thinking, why should I be stupid to accept a call like that? That’s the wrong question. The right questions are : Are you a Christian? Have you worked out what it means that Christ is Lord of your life? If you haven’t worked that out, you need to. And if you are refusing to work out what it means that Christ is Lord of your life, then what Biblical right do you have to call yourself a Christian? I ask you again : Have you worked out what it means that Christ is Lord of your life?

If Christ is the Lord of your life, your primary responsibilities are to live for His glory, to glorify His name on this earth by your life, to discover and live out His will for your life on this earth. *1Cor.6:19-20* says, “you are not your own ... you have been bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your bodies.” You must be able to say at the end of your life, “*Lord, I have glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given me to do.*” Only then will you hear from Him on that final day, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Now His will for you may be to be a banker, or a businessman, or a builder, or a teacher, or a painter, or an ordinary laborer, or a housewife. The issue here is not how well you are doing in your job. The issue here is not how much money you are making or giving to the church. The primary issue here is whether you are glorifying the Lord in living out His will for your life.

I want to say also that if the Lord's call, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?", is probing and convicting your heart, I warn you, do not run. You can't run from God. If, by God's design, a bullet is waiting for you, you can't run from nor evade that bullet. So do not run. Instead, surrender to the Lord and His will for your life.

Talking about running, I know that there are many Christians who run by hiding. They hide themselves by making themselves busy with activities in the church that they are doing very effectively for all to see. But that does not change the fact that they are running because to embrace God's will for their lives would demand sacrifices and changes that they are not prepared to make. It is clear in God's word that there are those who live in submission to the Lord's will and there are those who live in the realm of what might have been. The what-might-have-been life is the life of wood, hay and stubble.

Arif & Kathy Khan didn't run. Their reward on earth was bullets from guns. But we do not labor for earthly rewards. Earthly rewards do not count. Earthly rewards will perish. What do we labor for? I answer in closing with the words of the apostle Peter in *1Pet.1:3-4*, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Are you laboring for this imperishable and undefiled inheritance?

Au revoir, Arif Khan. Au revoir Kathy Khan. In God's will we shall see you again on that glorious day when the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and the dead in Christ are raised up.

