

FURTHER REFLECTIONS



A Big Mistake

Greg H. Parsons, Global Director, U.S. Center for World Mission

How can something be God's sovereign will and also be a big mistake?

While heart-wrenching to us, we know God is glorified through suffering. While we can't understand, it can galvanize believers to pray and seek God to turn this to advance the gospel.

By now you have heard that in early August, ten believers working in medical aid in Afghanistan were murdered. One of those was Tom, who with his wife, Libby, had served in the country for 34 years. They raised three daughters there. Some of us at the USCWM met Tom and Libby when they spoke here a few times over the years.

Like you, many thoughts flooded my heart and prayers as I heard about this.

First, these are the kind of people we need in the task. They deeply loved the people, knew one of the main languages well and understood the culture. They didn't give up. They laid down their lives for the Lord.

THE LIVES OF TOM, AND THE NINE OTHERS WHO WERE ALSO GUNNED DOWN, WILL, THROUGH OUR PRAYERS, BE LIKE A SEED THAT DIES AND IMPLANTS THE LIFE OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS PLACE OF TURMOIL AND PAIN.

It would have been easy to say, "30 years is enough" and taken a desk job back home.

As time passes, we will see some of the amazing details of God's provision through all of their lives and deaths. We still won't know the countless number of lives impacted by them over these years. The former Afghan foreign minister and a student of Tom, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, was quoted as saying: "Dr. Little travelled the length and breadth of Afghanistan, treating

thousands and thousands of Afghans." One estimate: Tom had treated 250,000 Afghans since arriving in the 1970s.

No matter what happens next, we know God has been at work, is at work and will be at work—nothing will thwart His will.

But, I believe this was a big mistake by Satan! Because I believe, by faith, that:

- Afghans will realize that this is *not* the Afghanistan they want. They do not want to live under ruthless leaders who care more about their power than people who need eye care.
- Afghans, tens of thousands of them, who have been served by these faithful servants will rise up against the Taliban and other evil forces and resist their now powerful sway.
- *You* are going to pray. You are going to encourage others to pray and get involved sacrificially. My

friend, Ajith Fernando, was quoted as saying,

People who are unfulfilled after pursuing things that do not satisfy may be

astonished to see Christians who are joyful after depriving themselves for the sake of the gospel.

- As a result of growing prayers and mobilization, new believers will be sent out.
- We will all pray that this attack of our real Enemy will end up being a tool in God's hand to break the power of the Taliban in Afghanistan and other evil, and bring the gospel in power.

- The lives of this man, and the nine others who were gunned down, will, through our prayers, be like a seed that dies and implants the life of the gospel in this place of turmoil and pain.

We shouldn't need this kind of motivation, yet historically God has used these kinds of events to mobilize His children to action. It happened 55 years ago when five missionaries were killed in a tribal area in Ecuador. It also happened with Chet Bitterman in 1981, and with several other missionaries since.

Chet Bitterman wrote in his journal in 1978:

The situation in Nicaragua is getting worse. If Nicaragua falls, I guess the rest of Central America will, too. Maybe this is just some kind of self-inflicted martyr complex, but I find this recurring thought that perhaps God will call me to be martyred for Him in His service in Colombia. I am willing. (According to his biography, *Called to Die*.)

These and others are spoken of in Revelation 6:9b when John saw "those who had been violently murdered because of the testimony they had given." John is told they must wait until the full number was reached of those "who were going to be killed as they had been" (vs. 11).

Will you commit to pray as I outlined above? Together, we can turn this into a big mistake of the Enemy. Let us know if you are willing to pray. Sign up on the USCWM Facebook page to log your commitment, or write or email me: greg.parsons@uscwm.org [facebook](#) [globe](#)