**Sunday, October 2, 2011**

**Welcome** - Greg Snow

**Call to Worship** – Yousef Nadarkhani (*Source:**Telegraph.co.uk; Baptist Press; The Open Sourcebook*)

An Iranian pastor facing a death sentence remained in jail Saturday as the White House publicly asked Iran to release him, and friends of the pastor urged the international community to maintain its pressure. Iran state media put out a stunning report Saturday claiming that the imprisoned Christian pastor is facing the death sentence for rape and extortion, not for apostasy and refusing to renounce his religion.

Yousef Nadarkhani, pastor of a 400-member church, could be executed at any moment in Iran for refusing to deny his Christian faith. He was arrested in 2009 for complaining about the Quran being taught to his son in school. "Nadarkhani told the Iranian government, 'I'm Christian and I would like that my children receive Christian teachings -- not Muslim teachings.' So they arrested him and they condemned him to death for apostasy" and subsequently charged him with apostasy for leaving Islam, although a court investigation this year revealed that he had never been a Muslim. The court upheld his death sentence because, it said, he had Muslim ancestry. Iran hasn't executed someone for apostasy since 1990.

Four times this week Nadarkhani went to court and was given a chance to recant, and he refused each time. Nadarkhani told the judge, "Repent means to return. What should I return to? To the blasphemy that I had before my faith in Christ?"

"To the religion of your ancestors, Islam," the judge reportedly replied.

"I cannot," Nadarkhani responded.

There have been over 300 arrests of Christians in 35 cities across Iran since June 2010. Detainees are typically held in unsanitary prisons, sometimes in solitary confinement, with evidence of torture and interrogation tactics being used against them on account of their faith. Excessively high bail demands, some as great as $30,000, see title deeds to detainees’ houses being given in return for their liberty. Those inmates whose families cannot meet these demands remain detained.

Please stand with me as we say this pray together:

Lord, as we worship you, our Warrior-King, we admit that we often forget that our lives are a battle.

Congregation
**We know that we battle not with flesh and blood,
but with the devil and the powers of darkness.
Arm us with your power, and help us persevere in this challenge.**

When we suffer for our sins,
may we be humble,
hoping for heaven in the midst of our suffering.

Congregation
**Our savior Jesus has paid the price for our sins,
and we look with hope for his return.**

May we remember his Cross,
may we walk empowered by his Spirit,
may our lives glorify our God by the power of his grace,
and may we never be ashamed to tell the wondrous story of Jesus and His love.
Amen.

**Song of Praise** *–* I Love To Tell The Story

**2 Thessalonians 1:11-12**

“Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

**Songs of Worship** – I Will Glory In My Redeemer; I Will Sing Of My Redeemer

**Romans 13:11-12**

… the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

**Song of Praise** – Sing Allelu (Ode 40)

**Offering**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor, & theologian. His association with the German Military Intelligence Office resulted in his arrest in April 1943 and his refusal to recant on God’s word subsequently led to his hanging in April 1945, 23 days before the Nazis' surrender.

The following is an excerpt from Bonhoffer’s book titled, *The Cost of Discipleship:*

When war seemed inevitable, Bonhoeffer’s friends abroad wanted him to leave Germany to save his life, for he was unalterably opposed to serving in the Army in an aggressive war.... In June 1939, American friends got him out of Germany. But soon he felt that he could not stay there, but that he had to return to his country. When he came to England on his return from the United States, his friends quickly realized that Bonhoeffer’s heart belonged to his oppressed and persecuted fellow Christians in Germany and that he would not desert them at a time when they needed him most.

“I shall have no right,” Bonhoeffer wrote before leaving America, “to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people."... Bonhoeffer never regretted this decision, not even in prison, where he wrote in later years:

“I am sure of God’s hand and guidance... You must never doubt that I am thankful and glad to go the way which I am being led. My past life is abundantly full of God’s mercy, and, above all sin, stands the forgiving love of the Crucified.”

Bonhoeffer (together with his sister Christel and her husband) was arrested by the Gestapo in the house of his parents on April 5th, 1943. In prison and concentration camps, Bonhoeffer greatly inspired by his indomitable courage, his unselfishness and his goodness, all those who came in contact with him. He even inspired his guards with respect, some of whom became so much attached to him that they smuggled out of prison his papers and poems written there, and apologized to him for having to lock his door after the round in the courtyard.

His own concern in prison was to get permission to minister to the sick and to his fellow prisoners, and his ability to comfort the anxious and depressed was amazing. We know what Bonhoeffer’s word and religious assistance meant to his fellow prisoners, especially during their last hours.

In his hearing before the Gestapo during his imprisonment, defenseless and powerless... only fortified by the word of God in his heart, he stood erect and unbroken before his tormentors. He refused to recant, and defied the Gestapo machine by openly admitting that, as a Christian, he was an implacable enemy of [Hitler's] National Socialism and its totalitarian demands toward the citizen—defied it, although he was continually threatened with torture and with the arrest of his parents, his sisters and his fiancée. In 1944, when friends & a few prison guards made an attempt to liberate him and to take him to safety abroad, he decided to remain in prison in order not to endanger others.

The last service which Dietrich Bonhoeffer held on the day before his death... 'moved all deeply...' Bonhoeffer, who was never tried, went steadfastly on his last way to be hanged, and died with admirable calmness and dignity. Dietrich Bonhoffer declared “...the Christian must be prepared, if necessary, to offer his life for this.

**Songs of Worship** – Be Thou My Vision; In Christ Alone

**Message** - "*Danger In The Church – Part 1*"; Scripture Reference: 2 Timothy 3:1-9

 “*But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.”* (verse 1)

The church has suffered through many seasons of false teachers. John Warwick Montgomery discusses the difficult times as he offers a list of what he calls “the damnable epochs of church history.” Seven specific movements from the sacramentalism of the Middle Ages ; to the subjectivism that is so rampant in our own day *(Source: John MacArthur)*:

1. Sacramentalism – the church replaced God
2. Rationalism – reason was God
3. Orthodoxism - god was sterile, impersonal orthodoxy
4. Politicism - god was state
5. Ecumenism - god was uncritical fellowship & cooperation among nominal Christians
6. Experientialism - god became personal experience
7. Subjectivism - self has become god; still reigns in much of Christendom
8. “*For men will be lovers of self”* (verses 2-4)

The love of self is the foundation & fountain of all sin – PRIDE.

Today’s church scene is characterized by self love, self esteem, self worth, self fulfillment. It’s all about you!

1. Results of a selfish person
2. Lover of money – materialism; prosperity gospel
3. Boastful – proud, bragging, hero of his own stories
4. Arrogant – idea of superiority, my way is best
5. Abusive – slanderous
6. Disobedient to Parents – end result is the child will obey no one
7. Ungrateful – we deserve everything
8. Unholy – gross indecency
9. Heartless – unloving
10. Unappeasable – irreconcilable
11. Slanderous – malicious gossips
12. Without Self Control – doesn’t care what happens to anyone else
13. Brutal – savage like, wild beast
14. Not lovers of good – not loving good
15. Treacherous – turn against own family
16. Reckless – careless, rash
17. Conceited – high view of self
18. Lovers of pleasure -

**Time of Prayer**