

Romans 12:9-21
Conquer Evil by Doing Good!
WRCoB 1.26.20

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hqed21AT-Qk>

This man whom you see in the video
Is the Rev. Lawan Andimi

District Supervisor of the Michika District
Of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN).

And Chairman of the Michika chapter
Of the ecumenical group, Christian Association of Nigeria.

Boko Haram, an ISIS connected terrorist group
Abducted him and held him for ransom
On January 3rd, 2020.

Boko Haram released the video while he was in captivity.

This past Monday, January 21
Boko Haram executed Andimi.

I quote from a journalist
Who has connections to Boko Haram
From a news brief in Christianity Today.

*“Rev. Andimi was a church leader, a father to his children
and the community he served. My condolences go to his
family.”*

“Reverend Lawan Andimi was beheaded yesterday afternoon, the video of the appalling executions with that of a soldier was obtained at 2:42 pm,” wrote Salkida.

“I made sure that the family, the authorities and the church were duly informed before the news was put out to the public this morning.”

Rev. Joel Billi, the President

Of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN),

Confirmed the pastor’s death

With a note to David Steele

Our Executive Director in Elgin.

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Though, I did not know him personally

We have many mutual friends and colleagues

Our good friend Paul Gadzama

Who visited here this past Thanksgiving

With his wife, Beckie said this.

It is really a sad day for us who particularly know Andimi closely. A very soft-spoken gentleman with few words but courageous.

I tried to share words of comfort with his daughter in Maiduguri earlier in the day as she sobbed through.

Thanks for the prayers which is most needed for the family and church at this moment of grief.

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It is impossible for me to comprehend such a hideous act
To such a gentle soul
Particularly in the name of God.

As if God would ever condone such actions!

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And it's not just Christians being persecuted!

Religious persecution is alive and well in the world today.

From the ethnic Uighurs who are Muslim in China
The ethnic Rohingyas, also Muslim, in Myanmar
To the Christians in Syria, China and West Africa.

Religious intolerance is growing at an exponential rate.

According to the Christianity Today article

Nigeria is the second-most violent country for persecuted Christians (Pakistan is No. 1), according to the 2020 World Watch List released last week by Open Doors.

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Rev. Andimi's execution is heavy on my heart this week.

In fact, the whole of Christian persecution in Nigeria
Obviously touches Judith and I deeply.

These are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

And Rev. Andimi's death is not an isolated incident.

There are weekly reports of such atrocities in Nigeria.

Boko Haram has spread fear, death and destruction
Throughout Northeastern Nigeria
Where the majority of Brethren live.

There are Brethren who have lived in IDP camps
Going on 6 years now.

They will not return to their homes
Due to the threat of death and destruction.

All across northern Nigeria
The nomadic Fulani group armed with modern weapons
Terrorize Christian villages
Including Judith's own village

Destroying crops, burning homes and killing indiscriminately
At will without any fear of retribution.

Can you even imagine what it must be like
To live in perpetual fear of persecution?

I know we have our problems here in the USA
But I am exceedingly grateful
For the safety and security
Of life in America.

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If you know me by now
You know I don't use the term "evil" frequently.

You have not heard many sermons
On demons, the Devil, or Satan.

I emphasize love and grace.

However, I recognize the reality of evil.

And it's not just about people making poor choices.

There is a spiritual battle raging
Between the forces of good and evil.

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Scott Simon, journalist and host of NPR's Weekend Edition
Has similar thoughts.

He wrote an op-ed piece in 2017
Entitled *Meditation on 'Evil.'*

He had been watching some of the sickening images
Of the chemical weapons attack in Syria
That killed scores of people.

His daughters were watching too.

He went to grab the remote but then thought,
"This is our world. They should see some of this."

We watched in silence. I've covered a lot of wars, but could think of nothing to say to make any sense. Finally one of our daughters asked, "Why would anyone do that?"

Simon says, *I have always avoided using the word "evil" when covering terrible events, even those in Bosnia and Kosovo that would later be labeled war crimes. I was of a generation educated to believe that "evil" was a cartoonish*

moral concept, a word we used only when we didn't know what madness or imagined infraction might drive human beings to commit murder, even on a mass scale.

He says, I still avoid saying "evil" as a reporter. But as a parent, I've grown to feel it may be important to tell children about evil, as we struggle to explain cruel and incomprehensible behavior they may see not just in history — in whatever they will learn about the Holocaust, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur — but in our own times.

Simon goes on to say that he interviewed

The general of the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda.

The general knew of the upcoming plan by the Hutus

To massacre Tutsi civilians

But was prevented by his superiors from intervening.

Soon after, in a period of less than three months

The Hutus had killed more than 800,000 Tutsi civilians.

The general, a Canadian citizen said what happened

Made him believe in evil, in a force called the Devil.

The general told Scott Simon, "*I think that evil and good are playing themselves out and God is monitoring and looking at how we respond to it.*"

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And how should we respond to the presence of evil

In our world today?

As a nation, we should suggest and support
The United Nations to play
A larger role in world peacekeeping.

We should support, advocate and participate in ways
That help all people in the world
Overcome evil with good.

Particularly since many nations
Are unwilling or unable to keep evil in check.

We have to be concerned and get involved
With what is happening to people in the world.

We must not become isolationistic
Believing it's none of our business.

As the ghost of Jacob Marley
Said in Charles Dickens novel, *The Christmas Carol*
“Mankind is our business.”

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As a church, we need to be intentional in our prayer life.

We not only need to pray
For our brothers and sisters in Christ

We need to pray for all people exposed to such evil.

I believe we need to support
The ongoing Nigeria Crisis Fund
Used to rebuild people's lives who suffered
Under Boko Haram's reign of terror.

Individually, we need to live out
Our calling as followers of Christ
As instructed by the Apostle Paul.

There, we find the core of Christian living.

Let me reread it for special emphasis
This time using the New Living Translation.

Romans 12:9-21 (NLT)

⁹ Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹ Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. ¹² Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³ When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵ Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord.

20 Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.”

21 Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

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It was Martin Luther King, Jr

Whose birthday we celebrated last Monday who said

I am convinced that love is the most durable power in the world To return hate for hate does nothing but intensify the existence of evil in the universe. Someone must have sense enough and religion enough to cut off the chain of hate and evil, and this can only be done through love.

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I mourn for our Nigerian Brethren

And the Christian community in Nigeria.

I grieve the loss of such a great man as Rev. Andimi.

I am also moved by his words in the video clip

“By the grace of God, I will be together with my wife, my children, and my colleagues,”

“[But] if the opportunity has not been granted, maybe it is the will of God.

“Be patient, don’t cry, don’t worry. But thank God for everything.”

They held his funeral services yesterday

Officiated by the President of EYN, Rev. Joel Billi.