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Issue 121

# The Next Step

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## Canberra Aboriginal Church

Canberra Christian Fellowship  
(in the Methodist Tradition)



Canberra Christian Fellowship (in the Methodist Tradition) and Canberra Aboriginal Church  
Worship Services SUSPENDED due to COVID-19 coronavirus threat

### Persecution, Prayer and Mission



In one of his recent Youtube sermons, Roy, talking about the great tribulation (Revelation 7) said "I agree with Les Stewart's explanation of that passage. "The great tribulation" is life itself ... in this sin sick world!", "when it is lived for Jesus in these perishing bodies of flesh yet have souls which have been born of the Spirit, ... Friends, throughout the history of God's church there have been wretched and unbridled periods of tremendous persecution and attack".

"If you speak to [people in] many places around the world about the coming persecution they will look at you in disbelief ... 'How can it get any worse than it is now? My brothers are being put to death, others are being put in prison so we have to meet in secret'".

Not long after watching Roy preach that sermon, I came across another Youtube video focussing on 5 of the cruelest rulers in history, and being curious to see who made the list, I watched it. Queen Ranavalona 1 of Madagascar (whom I admit to never having heard of before) was third on their list. Part of the tribulation or not, her story and those of other cruel rulers, both on and missing from that list, emphasise what an evil, dangerous and unGodly place this world can be as Roy pointed out. It doesn't take much thought to think of places in the present day where there is conflict, oppression or little regard for the lives of people. From time to time we may feel pressure from unGodly elements of our society, however considering the circumstances faced by so many others, we have it easy.

Queen Ranavalona 1 came to power in 1828 and ruled until 1861.

She pursued a policy of isolationism and self-sufficiency, reducing economic and political ties with European powers, ... and taking vigorous measures to eradicate the small but growing Malagasy Christian movement initiated ... by members of the London Missionary Society. She made heavy use of the traditional practice of fanompoana (forced labour as tax payment) ... She also maintained order within her realm through the traditional practice of trial by the ordeal of tangena to determine guilt, a practice that had a 20 to 50 percent death rate. The combination of regular warfare, disease, difficult forced labor and harsh measures of justice resulted in a high mortality rate among soldiers and civilians alike during her 33-year reign, with Madagascar's population reducing from 5 million in 1833 to 2.5 million in 1839.

At first relaxed towards Christianity, she soon imposed bans on church service attendance for all Malagasy. Those who possessed a Bible, worshipped in congregation or continued to profess adherence to Christianity were fined, jailed, manacled, subjected to trial by ordeal, or executed. 15 Christian leaders were dangled on ropes 150 feet above a rock-filled ravine before the ropes were cut upon their refusal to renounce Christianity.

Ranavalona's European contemporaries generally condemned her policies and characterised her as a tyrant at best and insane at worst.

[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=5+cruelest+rulers+of+all+time+](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=5+cruelest+rulers+of+all+time+) 6.03 into video  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ranavalona\\_I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ranavalona_I)

I didn't intend to pass on such a negative story, however the combination of Roy's sermon, the Youtube video and two phone calls I received very soon afterwards changed my mind.

Paul from Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) rang to say the MAF people were praying for their supporters and to ask how they could best pray for our Fellowship. We chatted about how we were faring in this age of Coronavirus restrictions and our link with Ian and Adele Purdey, now in Madagascar with MAF. It was very encouraging to know they would be praying for us, and having so recently seen the video and read of past persecution in Madagascar, to remind ourselves that God and Christian witness and service is active there.





The next day I received another call, this time from Daniel at Compassion. He has recently become Compassion's Relationship Manager – South East Area, so was ringing to make contact and get to know a little about us.

Before COVID-19 disrupted the lives and plans of the worldwide community, someone from Compassion was to have come along to one of our June services, preached and updated us on Compassion's activities. As our services are suspended that can't happen, however Daniel offered to provide us with a sermon, both in printed form and on video, in place of a physical visit. Look out for it in a week or so.

The people from Compassion will also be praying for us.

I hope the stress of COVID-19 restrictions has been kinder to you than to some frazzled individuals



### Chaplains

Please pray that the chaplains we particularly support can adapt their ministries to the conditions we all currently face. - Mr. Owen Chadwick - Universities chaplaincy, Rev. Bob Prior - Racecourse chaplaincy, Rev. Paul Tabulutu - N.S.W. / A.C.T. Fijian churches



#### Devotional material



#### Contacts

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#### Bible Reading



Prayer

Fellowship by Phone



A goofy grin or a shy little smile. Beaming from ear to ear. Whatever your style, your smile is one of your most beautiful features. Because it isn't really about lips, or teeth or rosy cheeks. It's about being so full of the love and joy and hope and kindness of the Lord that you simply can't hold it in. You've just got to share it with the world ... With a great big grin!

Yes, God loves the way you smile, especially when it's because of Him.

From Hallett Cove (South Australia) Uniting Church Newsletter

### Prayer Points

Please pray

- for Aboriginal communities all over Australia, that they will stay safe and coronavirus free
- for Aboriginal pastors across the nation as they minister in these changed conditions
- for Bible translators working to make the Bible available to Aboriginal people in their own language
- for each other
- that God will use these changed circumstances to speak to people's hearts, minds and souls and draw them to Himself

and give thanks for the Canberra Aboriginal Church Sunday virtual gatherings when they meet remotely for worship, prayer and fellowship.

Canberra Aboriginal Church physical gatherings are unlikely until the COVID-19 danger is well past and winter over as most of their people are older and in the 'more vulnerable' category.

