

How to Pray for the Persecuted Church

Prayer is the most necessary action, the greatest gift, the hardest spiritual labor, as well the simplest cry of a loving heart. The time that you spend in prayer has an eternal impact on the lives of men and women throughout our world. Through prayer our world is changed, closed doors are opened, resistant people are made receptive, leaders are put down and raised up, and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is extended. Hebrews 13:3 says, "*Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as -being yourselves also in the body.*" No matter where The Voice of the Martyrs ministers, the first request of persecuted Christians is always the same: "*Pray for us*" The Word of God remains our best guide for knowing how to pray for our persecuted sisters and brothers worldwide.

1. That God would give them the right words and that they would fearlessly make Christ known.

Here Paul tells how to pray for him when he was suffering for Christ in jail -- notice his prayer was not for release.

Ephesians 6:19-20 "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

Colossians 4:2-4 "Devote yourselves to prayer... praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak."

2. That they will see God's grace as sufficient and God's power perfected in their weakness.

(2 Corinthians 12:9-10) Many of the pastors, evangelists and workers who are beaten and imprisoned for their bold witness leave behind sons, daughters and spouses to fend for themselves. Pray for wives of those imprisoned. With the absence of the breadwinner, the responsibility for caring and feeding of the family falls on the wife. Sometimes the wife is also forced to provide for her husband in prison (often the case in Vietnam). If she is also arrested, then together they have to bear the anguish of leaving often quite young children to fend for themselves. Pray for them.

3. That they would love Christ's appearing all the more.

2 Timothy 4:5-8 "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Hebrews 11:35 "...others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection".

4. That they will rejoice in sharing the sufferings of Jesus so that they will rejoice even more when Christ is revealed.

Hebrews 10:34 "...accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one."

Matthew 5:12 "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

1 Peter 4:13 "but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation."

5. That they will endure.

Hebrews 10:36 "For you have need of endurance".

Hebrews 5:8 "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." Pray for Christian work among refugees. Pray that as the refugees are led to Christ, they will be willing to return to their countries to take the Gospel back with them.

6. That they will love Christ far more than life itself.

Revelation 12:10-11 "they overcame (Satan) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death."

Philippians 1:21 "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Acts 20:24 "I (Paul) do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course."

7. That they will love their enemies.

Luke 6:27-31 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Pray for those who govern, that they will repent and turn to Christ Jesus. Whole nations can be changed when a leader is saved. Pray that the strongholds will be overthrown in each country and that the light of God's glory will break through.

8. That they not enter into temptation –

an easy possibility under the stress of persecution (Luke 22:39-45 - Jesus in the garden)

9. That they will rejoice that they are considered worthy to suffer for HIS name.

Acts 5:41 "So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name."

10. That they will remember they were made for such persecution.

Acts 14:22 "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."

Philippians 1:29 "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

11. That they will live the joy of the Lord before their persecutors.

Acts 16:25 "But about midnight Paul and Silas (in jail) were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

Philippians 1:28 "in no way alarmed by your opponents -- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God."

12. That they will remember their unbelievable future glory.

Romans 8:18 "For I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

13. That they would learn to more completely trust in God.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 "For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead"

14. That they would rejoice that they bear in their bodies the 'brand marks of Christ'.

Galatians 6:17 "From now on let no one cause trouble for me, for I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus."

15. That they would rejoice in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's sufferings.

Colossians 1:24 "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions."

Note: Our sufferings do not add to the atoning worth of Jesus' sufferings. Rather, His sufferings are not known to the world and so we suffer to bring that news to those His sufferings were meant to save.

16. For their physical protection and deliverance.

Matthew 26:39 "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Acts 12:5 "So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God."

Philippians 1:19 "For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance (from jail) through your prayers."

Philemon 22 "I hope that through your prayers I shall be given to you (from jail)"

Romans 15:30-31 "Now I urge you, brethren... to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea".

God had predicted persecution: Acts 20:23-24 "the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course"

And the suffering came: Acts 21:30-31 "And all the city was aroused, and the people rushed together; and taking hold of Paul, they dragged him out of the temple; and... were seeking to kill him.