

Prayer Items October 2015

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

2 Timothy 3:10-12a.

United States/Afghanistan—Even as U.S. and international troops have tried to bring freedom from oppression in Afghanistan, U.S. troops have been told to turn a blind eye to an epidemic of sexual abuse and sexual enslavement of young boys and girls by Afghan militia and police leaders. This atrocious practice has become endemic among powerful men in Afghanistan, yet U.S. military personnel have been told that this is merely a “cultural practice” and not to intervene in any way—even when they hear the children screaming in the night. When U.S. military personnel have reported it or acted out to stop it, they themselves have been targeted for punishment. Ironically, the local villages where poor and powerless families are preyed upon by the Afghan local police, see U.S. troops as complicit because they are involved in setting up and training these local authorities—and are told not to intervene when village children and families are victimized. In one case, the family of Lance Corporal Gregory Buckley, Jr. feels that this belief among locals that U.S. military is partially responsible led to the murder of Lance Corporal Buckley and two other marines by a teenage boy being abused on their base by a notorious Afghan Police commander Sarwar Jan. After receiving repeated reports about a 14-year-old girl being raped and then forced to marry her attacker and another young boy being chained to the bed of another police commander, Army Captain Dan Quinn and Sgt. First Class Charles Martland beat the commander who had chained up the child and then beaten up his mother. They did this to ensure the child would not be further victimized, and for their actions Captain Quinn was relieved of his command and pulled from Afghanistan and Sgt. Martland is being forcibly retired. Pray for the family of Lance Corporal Quinn and for Captain Quinn and Sgt. Martland, giving thanks for their integrity and desire to protect the helpless. Pray that the U.S. military and diplomacy practices will no longer force troops to turn a blind eye. Pray they will instead take an active role in addressing these atrocities and defending the powerless. Pray for the Afghan police and militia that this incredible evil will be rooted out, that individuals of integrity will gain power and bring justice to this horrific situation. Pray for great repentance and reform. Pray especially for the numerous young victims of this abuse, that somehow they may be able to escape this darkness, to be comforted and healed, and to find the light of Christ. (Source: The New York Times)

Thailand—In an update to the case of British worker rights researcher, Andy Hall, we are encouraged and give thanks that one of four cases brought against him by Thailand's Natural Fruit Company was dismissed in September 2015. The other criminal and civil cases are scheduled to begin on 15 October 2015. Hall, who reported about grave abuses and slave-like conditions at this international pineapple supplier could face 7 years in prison and more than \$10 million damages to Natural Fruit. Pray that the Thai courts will continue to act with justice and integrity and dismiss all these outrageous charges against Andy Hall. Pray that both Andy Hall's findings and his subsequent ordeal will motivate the Thai government to enact nationwide reforms to ensure the end of worker abuse and exploitation, as well as the trafficking of human beings. (Source: Walkfree)

Nepal—The nation of Nepal has experienced tremendous amounts of turmoil in recent years, related both to political events and natural disasters. Still recovering from the massive earthquake last April that killed 9,000, injured more than 23,000, and left hundreds of thousands homeless, Nepal is struggling to maintain peace and stability on a political front as well. Most recently, a vote on Nepal's new constitution defining it as a secular republic has sparked violent demonstrations from ethnic groups that feel the constitution marginalizes them and who also want Nepal to be a Hindu state. At least 45 people have died in the protests, which have also cut off vital supply roads from India, cutting off important food and fuel resources. Amid the protests, Hindu radicals have specifically targeted Christian individuals and churches. Two churches in eastern Nepal were bombed and significantly damaged, while a third bomb in another church failed to detonate. Pray for the radical group, Hindu Morcha Nepal, who left flyers at these sites demanding Christian leaders convert to Hinduism. Pray that they might seek peace instead of violence and find the light and life of Christ. Pray for the congregations of the threatened churches that they would have comfort and confidence instead of fear and be filled with the

spirit of forgiveness rather than one of retribution. Pray for those who are still recovering from the earthquake, who have lost loved ones through that tragedy or from the violent protests, or those who are now vulnerable because of shortages due to the interruption of supplies. Pray for comfort and provision. Pray for the safety of the Nepalese people and the stability of the whole country. (Sources: BBC; The Voice of the Martyrs)

Latin America—Often perceived as a land where Christianity is prevalent, Latin America, in reality, is an overlooked site of religious persecution and pervasive human rights abuses. In Mexico, more Roman Catholic priests were murdered or disappeared than in any other country in the world, and protestants have faced death threats, evictions from homes, loss of water supply, barring of children from schools and other forms of discrimination. In Cuba, believers have been arrested on their way to church. In the region known as the Northern Triangle, comprised of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, Christians and other civilians are caught between violent gangs and equally violent governmental police and military forces. Recently, two evangelicals were killed in a massacre aimed at gangs, and the uncle of one of the victims disappeared after speaking out about the atrocity—his body was later found, with evidence that he'd been tortured. Pastors Like Mario Vega in El Salvador have been threatened on internet sites associated with government forces. Pray for pastors who continue to serve and have outreach to gang members despite threats to their lives and congregations. Give thanks for the courage of human rights and religious freedom activists, such as Mario Felix who document human rights abuses at great risk to their own safety and well-being. Pray for church leaders and their congregations in Mexico, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras as they faithfully follow Christ under suspicion, threats, and discrimination—that they might remain courageous, steadfast, and bear much fruit for the kingdom of God. Pray for violent gangs and corrupt governments that they might turn from evil and accept the light and life of Christ. (Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)

Mauritania—Though slavery was formally abolished in this African nation in 2007, Mauritania continues to be the country with the highest percentage of their population enslaved in the world. Chances are good that you have clothes in your closet that have a “Made in Mauritania” label in them. In fact, slavery is an entrenched cultural tradition that can be “inherited” from one generation to the next. Due to the government's complete failure to enforce anti-slavery laws, activists like Biram Dah Abeid—the founder of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement—are forced to endure harassment and imprisonment for their work calling for freedom and justice. Biram Dah Abeid, Brahim Bilal Ramdhane, Brahim Jiddou, Yacoub Inalla, and Sabar Houssein are all anti-slavery activists currently in prison for their human rights work. Pray for their protection, sustenance, and prompt release. Pray that the government of Mauritania would change course and enact effective reforms of both judicial practices and societal norms to eradicate this atrocious practice from its country. (Sources: Walkfree; Global Slavery Index)

Pakistan- An illiterate man and his family were severely tormented for using a poster as a floor mat that contained a phrase from the Quran. A mob blackened the faces of Awais Qamar (also called Gharibu, meaning "poor man"), his wife Rukhsana, their daughter Farzana, and Qamar's sister-in-law, Rehana and then beat them all. They also shaved Gharibu's head, wrapped a garland around his neck and dragged him through the streets of the village. Thankfully, someone notified the police and they were able to stop the violence and protect Gharibu and his family. Praise God for His intervention, and pray for this Christian family's healing and future protection. As they will likely not be welcomed back to their home, pray for God to provide a new place for them to live. Additionally, pray for their faith and trust in Jesus to remain strong despite their suffering. May God use them as a light for the Gospel. (World Watch Monitor)

India- A Christian leader in Kashmir named Yousuf Bhat was recently shot to death when gunmen broke into his home. Yousuf had left Islam to follow Christ sixteen years ago, and became a church planter and spread the Gospel through distributing Bibles and the Jesus Film. Pray that this tragic act of violence would prove to further the Gospel and embolden other Christians in the Kashmir region rather than frighten or silence them. Pray also for great comfort for the family and friends of Youcef Bhat as they mourn his violent death. (Voice of the Martyrs)

Turkey- Fifteen Turkish Protestant congregations have received written threats since August from extremists claiming to be part of IS. They have threatened to behead them for leaving Islam and choosing to follow Christ. Please pray fervently that these threats would come to nothing, that any attempt on their lives would be

thwarted, and that even those that seek to harm them would be convicted and powerfully transformed by the Holy Spirit to follow the one true God. Pray that Turkish believers would not be afraid to meet together, but that they would be bold and faithful to Christ. (World Watch Monitor)

Indonesia- A church in Aceh province was recently burned to the ground for the third time in the past three decades. The police have been threatened by the same extremist group to not come to the Christians' aide and as a result have chosen to not investigate and have officially blamed the fire on poor circuitry. Presently the congregation of 350 is meeting outdoors under a tent, and they are encouraging each other to respond with kindness to the perpetrators. They are strengthened to know that brothers and sisters around the world are praying for them, and they ask that we pray specifically for the Muslim extremists to turn to Christ and for justice to prevail in their town. Pray also that their outdoor worship gathering will touch the hearts of those nearby that overhear it. (Open Doors)

Laos- Tiang Kwentianthong, a 61-year-old believer, died on September 17 from complications experienced while imprisoned for his faith. Tiang was arrested and sentenced to prison last winter for praying for a sick woman without getting official permission to do so. Although he required diabetes medication, Tiang was continually denied access to his medication. He repeatedly requested treatment for his failing health while in prison but the officials refused. Shortly after being released, this father of six died from diabetic complications. Please pray for his wife and children to feel the comfort and help of Jesus. Pray that his tragic death would bring about a positive change in the treatment of prisoners in Laos, and that their very system of justice would be improved significantly. (Christian Post)