

May 2018 Prayer Items

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

—1 John 5: 14-15

Greece/Refugees—The refugee crisis in Europe continues unabated as a number of countries have closed their borders to those fleeing difficulties back home. This has left scores stranded in southern European countries, a huge number in Greece, which is still reeling from the financial crisis of 2008 and has the highest unemployment rate in Europe at 20 percent. As a result, many have turned to desperate measures in order to survive and see only a bleak future ahead of them. Young men such as an ex-dentistry student and another teenager who trekked thousands of miles from Afghanistan looking for safety and opportunity now are forced to sell their bodies for sex to feed themselves. Many also begin to use drugs to deal with the desperation of their situations. Pray for Khasim and Fazul (who did not give their real names because they are so ashamed of their situation) and the 3,000 other unaccompanied minors who are stranded in Greece, most of whom live day-by-day sleeping on the streets. Pray that many in this world will be the means of God meeting their immediate materials and their longterm needs of opportunity with compassion, grace, and diligence. Pray that they will be protected, healed, and restored—and most of all that they will find the hope and salvation of Christ. (Source: NBC News)

Nigeria/United States—Numerous girls and young women from Nigeria who escaped captivity from Boko Haram and were relocated to the United States are experiencing a new form of captivity. Human rights lawyer Emmanuel Ogebe has been accused of taking the women from their sponsor families and coercing them into speaking publicly at numerous fund-raising events of the horrors they experienced while held captive by the Islamist group. When the girls resisted the public and repeated reliving of their trauma, they claim Mr. Ogebe threatened to send them back to Nigeria and the likely recapture by Boko Haram. Several investigations have also implicated Mr. Ogebe in the misappropriation of funds for personal use which he denies. Pray that these girls who have already suffered so much would be spared further, and if these allegations of corruption are true, that Mr. Ogebe and anyone else involved would be brought to justice. Continue to pray for the spiritual, emotional, and physical healing of all the girls who have been abducted, abused, and tortured in Nigeria. (Source: *The Wall Street Journal*)

Turkey—Family and friends of American Pastor Andrew Brunson request renewed prayer as his “trial” in Turkey for espionage and alleged ties to terrorists moves forward. Brunson has been imprisoned since October of 2016 and American lawmakers have described him as being used as a pawn by the Erdogan regime which seeks the extradition of cleric Fetuhullah Gulen from the US. Gulen is accused of being behind the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey which saw a widespread roundup of suspected dissidents in its wake. Brunson, who has lived in Turkey for over 20 years denies the charges and Washington calls the charges against him “very weak,” and based on anonymous sources and “flights of fantasy.” (Sources: *Middle East Concern*; NBC News)

Yemen—Yemen is currently the site of the worst humanitarian crisis on the planet, and yet, despite this fact, thousands of primarily African refugees are flowing into the country in an effort to reach Saudi Arabia and other countries in hopes of finding safety and jobs. Instead, they have been prey to human traffickers, locked up in the most severe kinds of detention, been tortured and raped, and many then, are being forcibly returned to the countries they fled. It should be a clear communication of the level of desperation that these people are coping with that they are willing to brave a country with a conflict

worse than Syria, currently ravaged by cholera, and with huge shortages of basic necessities of food and medication in an effort to find a better life or a chance at survival. Pray God would provide for these desperate people and that the Holy Spirit would move the hearts of His people in the resourced world to be His hands and feet and reach out mightily and generously around the world to those in need. (Source: *Vice*)

Pakistan—A 25-year-old Pakistani Christian woman, Asma Yaqoob, who was set on fire for refusing to marry a Muslim man has recently died. The culprit was caught, confessed to the crime, and has been in jail ever since. Unfortunately, occurrences such as this are not uncommon in Pakistan. “According to a 2014 report from the NGO Movement of Solidarity and Peace, between 100 to 700 Christians girls are abducted, raped and forced into Islamic marriages every year.” Pray for the protection and preservation of Christian girls and women in Pakistan. Pray that if they are forced into an unwilling marriage that would be treated well, and that they might be a witness for Christ in their home and beyond. Pray the country of Pakistan would move toward more just and equitable treatment of all their citizens. (Source: *Christian Post*)

Iran—Iranian Christians request prayer for Aziz Majidzadeh (54) held in Evin Prison, Tehran. According to Kiaa Aalipour of Article 18, speaking to World Watch Monitor, on 2 March, security forces arrested a Christian convert in his home and forced him to go to a workshop near Karaj where many Christians are employed. The security forces started filming everything, pretending that it was for a Farsi language Christian satellite channel. They then arrested a group of twenty Iranian converts. Those arrested were interrogated and released, except for Aziz Majidzadeh, who was beaten and detained. His whereabouts were unknown until recently, when he was permitted to call his family and let them know that he is being detained in Evin Prison. To date there have been no formal charges made against him. Pray that Aziz would be comforted and strengthened in his faith even as he faces these difficulties. Pray he would be a light in this dark place, that many would come to Christ, and that he might soon be restored to his family and freedom. Pray for protection of his body, mind, and spirit as he goes through this ordeal. (Source: *World Watch Monitor*)

Myanmar—Several orphans from the Pa’O ethnic group were abducted by angry Buddhists in February 2017 after they distributed gospel tracts during a large Buddhist festival. The orphans, who live under the care of a Christian worker, had distributed gospel tracts in 18 Pa’O villages before being confronted by Buddhist monks at the festival. When the monks called for their arrest and attempted to shave their heads, the youth fled to their home with the Christian worker. But the monks sent villagers and Pa’O rebel army officers after the orphans, and four of them were taken. One managed to escape and return to his native village, while the other three were detained and had their heads shaved. After 10 days, another of the orphans was able to escape and return home. The two remaining boys are thought to be detained in a Buddhist monastery. Pray that the orphans will continue to grow in faith and that their evangelistic efforts will bear fruit and lead others to Christ. Also pray for the Christian worker as he cares for additional orphans and raises them as followers of Jesus. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

Uzbekistan—Local officials in Navoi, Uzbekistan, took an 8-year-old boy out of school without his parents’ knowledge in order to interrogate him about his family’s church attendance. Two days after raiding Nikolay Pivtsev’s home, confiscating the family’s Bible and computer, police picked up his son from school on January 26 and took him in for questioning. Later, they summoned both the boy and his mother to a meeting in which they threatened fines and imprisonment if Nikolay continued to attend church. Then, a month later, a judge fined the family double the monthly wage. Other Christians in Navoi and elsewhere in Uzbekistan have experienced similar harassment in the last few months. Pray that parents will continue to teach their children about Christ. (Source: *Voice of the Martyrs*)

International/Human Trafficking—The fight against global human trafficking has recently received aid from a seemingly unlikely source: banks. Human trafficking is one of the most lucrative illegal forms of commerce currently and to date, has been very low risk for those who practice in this trade. However, recent initiatives by governments and banks have uncovered new ways to combat this horrifying practice. These developments are encouraging by providing new tools in both the private and public sector to combat, but also they are encouraging because banking has not always traditionally been the most cooperative resource in fighting this criminal activity. Pray that these advances continue to make progress in effectively combating human trafficking, pray that perpetrators of these crimes at all levels of involvement are brought to justice, pray that increased awareness, education, and legal protections prevent more victims of this terrible crime. (Source: *The Economist*)

Armenia/Turkey—April marked the 103rd year of the Armenian genocide which saw the extermination of 1.5 million Armenians living under the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of Greeks and Assyrians were also massacred. These murders, and other atrocities, were related to the ethnicity and Christian faith of the people group, and to date, Turkey has refused to acknowledge the genocide. Similarly, US Presidents since Ronald Reagan (the last US President to use the term), have refused to use the term genocide despite promises to the contrary. This reluctance has been born largely out of political considerations as Turkey has been a strategic NATO ally. Yet due to current US-Turkey relations and the unique method of communication coming from the Trump administration, there is renewed hope that the standing US administration will utilize the terms “genocide” in relation to the events of 1915. The fact that these grave atrocities remain unacknowledged and unaddressed point to a history of human rights abuses in Turkey—even as they continue to lobby for admission into the European Union. It also demonstrates the need given to us by God and deeply embedded in human nature for truth and justice. Pray that after all these years, the world—and Turkey in particular—will finally acknowledge the evil perpetrated against hundreds of thousands of innocent people. And give thanks that one day Jesus will wipe away every tear and make all things right. (Source: *CNN*)