

International Day of Pray for the Persecuted Church
Sunday, November 4, 2018

**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.
They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.**

—Isaiah 61: 1-4

North Korea—Number one on Open Doors World Watch List, North Korea steadfastly remains the most dangerous place to be a Christian. Despite this, there are an estimated 300,000 believers in this culturally isolated, totalitarian state, where even owning a Bible is a capital offense. John Choi [name changed to protect family still living in North Korea] says the first execution he witnessed as a child was of a Christian, and that from preschool age onward, children and all citizens are unrelentingly indoctrinated with the message that Christians, foreign missionaries, Americans, and other Western societies are evil and violent, and that the ruling Kim family are divine. It is dangerous even to share the gospel with parents own children until they are old enough not to accidentally betray them. Escaped believers, like Lee Joo-Chan and Hea Woo, describe how small groups of believers would gather after midnight, dig up Bibles, whisper scripture and prayers, and maybe whisper a song of worship if they were feeling very bold, knowing the whole time this could mean execution or life in a prison camp, not just for themselves but for even three generations of their family. Pray for the perseverance and vigilance of these believers following Christ under the most perilous circumstances. Pray that their faith would remain strong and that they would have the opportunity and courage to share Jesus with others. Pray for a “Damascus Road” experience for many in North Korea, who would have no other way to encounter the truth of Christ, and pray that the Church there would grow and multiply exponentially. Pray for Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea, that he too might turn from darkness and find the light and life of Christ. **(Source: Open Doors)**

For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

—2 Corinthians 1:5

Afghanistan—“AP” is someone who knows firsthand what it means to give up everything for Christ. Growing up in Afghanistan, number two on the World Watch List for persecution, AP converted to Christianity at the age of 38, only to be completely ostracized by all his friends and family. But AP persevered and attended a small, makeshift church until November 2104, when gunmen burst in and began murdering the little congregation. AP was shot in the leg, and after being treated at a hospital, he was arrested—instead of the gunmen—and questioned about his Christian conversion. Recognizing the danger for his life, he fled to India with a 6-month visa, and is seeking asylum through the UN Human Rights Council. Now 60 years old and living in limbo, his persecution continues, as even other Afghan refugees shun him or even throw rocks at him or his home. A 30-year-old Afghan woman and recent Christian convert, “SI” confirms AP’s story, as she herself had to escape a forced marriage to an abusive man and the potentially violent retribution of her family for fleeing and for converting. Pray for AP and SI, and the many other Afghan believers, who literally have given up family, friends, their homes, and in some cases their lives for the sake of Christ. Pray that they would feel the presence of Jesus amid their loneliness, and that they might experience the unique joy of Christ and that others might find a compelling witness in their lives and their struggles. Pray for President Ashraf Ghani and the government of Afghanistan that they will seek justice for all their people and seek a proactive course to protect the human rights and religious freedom for every citizen. **(Source: World Watch Monitor)**

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

—Matthew 19:29

Somalia—This African nation is number three on the World Watch List, due to the extreme level of persecution experienced by Christians there. Terrorist group Al Shabaab have explicitly stated they intend to wipe out all Christians in Somalia, and to that end, have perpetrated mass atrocities. Summary execution by beheading is widespread, and Christian women are targets for rape and forced marriages and “conversions.” Due to this ongoing hostility, most Christians are secret believers. Pray for those who mourn the tragic loss of loved ones through these violent means. Pray for the sustenance of women suffering from trauma and abduction, as well as being forced to endure persecution daily in their homes. Pray that the Holy Spirit will comfort them and heal them emotionally and physically and spiritually. Pray for the spread of the Church in Somali despite persecution, and pray for those belonging to Al Shabaab, that they might turn from the evil they perpetuate and find salvation in Christ. **(Source: Frontline Missions International)**

Sudan—Sudan is a country long marked by violence and discrimination. The genocide in Darfur was perhaps the first time Sudan was widely covered by international media. However, the conflict and subsequent civil war between the Muslim North and the Christian South has continued to plague this region with violence. Amid this, Christians face daily threats to their families and to the very lives for their faith, especially if they have converted from Islam. Pray

for believers like Tajadin Idris Yousef, who was recently arrested along with 13 others in his home in Nyla. Initially three of the men were released because they were not Muslim-background believers, but Tajadin and nine others were moved to another police station where they were beaten and their families threatened. All but Tajadin succumbed and recanted. Now because of his steadfast refusal to renounce his faith, he is facing charges of apostasy for which the punishment is life in prison or death. Pray for this whole country that has endured decades of violence and where thousands of innocent civilians have been displaced and lost livelihoods as well as loved ones. Pray for the victims of the attack on the Emmanuel Christian College and Goli Primary School in South Sudan, where soldiers attacked and occupied the schools this past spring for days. At least five school children and several staff were killed and two 14-year-old girls were raped by soldiers from the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Pray for the staff and students of these two schools and for the families associated with the schools. Pray that they might have comfort in their grief and courage in their fear. Pray that all those traumatized in the attacks, including Tajadin in Nyla, would be healed in their hearts, minds, and bodies. Pray for President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, who has presided over this terror for decades, and who also needs to know the forgiveness of Christ. **(Source: Open Doors)**

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.

—Deuteronomy 10: 17-18

Pakistan—Pray for believers in Pakistan, such as Asia Bibi, a wife, mother of five, and farm worker who has been imprisoned since 2009 after drinking out of a communal water cup and accused of “contaminating it” by her coworkers. Based on this, she was convicted of blasphemy against Islam and sentence to death. Her case has been appealed numerous times, her family has had to go into hiding, and her life will be in incredible danger even if she is released. Pray also for Imran Gharfur, a Pakistani businessman, who was arrested, convicted of desecrating the Koran, and then sentenced to life in prison, after a few pages of a Islamic book flew into a garbage fire he had burning in the alley of his business. Despite his harsh sentence, Imran continues to take opportunities in prison to share his faith. Both Asia and Imran have been in prison for almost a decade, separated from family, and enduring appalling conditions. Pray that their lives will be a great witness to those around them, that God will use their suffering to bring others to Him. Pray for the faith and fortitude of their families, that none will lose their faith, but be encouraged to walk with Jesus because of the example of Asia and Imran. Pray for the country of Pakistan, rightly named the 5th most dangerous place to be a Christian, that it might be transformed by the grace of God, and that peace and justice will reign there. Pray for President Arif Alvi that he might rule with integrity and usher in greater religious freedom and more just laws in his country. **(Source: The Voice of the Martyrs)**

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

—Hebrews 13: 2-3

Eritrea—Dr. Kiflu Gebremeskel, Kidane Weldou, Haile Nayzgi have all been imprisoned in Eritrea from nearly 15 years for their Christian faith. They, like other believers in this tiny African nation, bordered by Ethiopia and the Red Sea, suffer some of the harshest conditions on the planet. They are held in the desert jam-packed into old shipping containers, where the daytime heat is routinely well over 100 degrees and the nights are cold and harsh. There are not adequate hygiene facilities, nor are prisoners given enough food or medical attention. They are subject to beatings and torture, all for their Christian faith. Pray for Eritrea, number six on the World Watch List, as it continues to be one of the most repressive regimes in the world. Pray that it would be a country marked by religious tolerance instead of oppression. Pray also for Twen Theodros and Mussie Ezaz and the approximately 3,000 Christians imprisoned for their faith in Eritrea. **(Source: The Voice of the Martyrs)**