

September 2017 Prayer Items

I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God.

—Luke 12: 4-8

Venezuela—This South American nation has been steadily plummeting into both a political and humanitarian crisis, as the economy has collapsed and there are terrible shortages of food and vital medicines. There is a deep divide between those who support the current President Maduro and the opposition, that holds the policies of previous president, Hugo Chavez and his successor, responsible for the collapse. There have been violent clashes, and subsequently, some very troubling developments indicating the breakdown of rule of law and human rights. The UN has reported that the Maduro government has used excessive force to repress dissent, such as the arbitrary detention of over 5,000 people, including the Mayor of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma, and opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez. There have also been documented reports of torture, such as hanging detainees by the wrists, beatings, electric shocks. At least 124 deaths are being investigated, allegedly perpetrated by both the government and the opposition. Pray for peace, truth, and justice to be restored to this nation. Pray for the innocent population who is suffering amid the corruption and abuses of those in power. Pray that those in control of the power and resources would stop protecting their own interests and begin to act with integrity and in the best interests of all people. (*Sources: BBC; Reuters*)

Philippines-- Islamic militants took Catholic priests and parishioners hostage three months ago when fighting erupted in the Southern city of Marawi. The hostages are still alive, but certainly need our prayers for protection and release. Please pray that they would be allowed to return home soon, and pray that this brutal conflict would come to an end soon. Pray that God would encourage and strengthen those who are suffering, and bring conviction to the hearts of the perpetrators. Pray that He would turn this horrifying ordeal into a good outcome. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Iran—We give thanks for the release of Maryam Nagash Zargaran, a Christian convert from Islam. Charged by the Iranian State of taking actions against national security, Maryam spent four years in the notorious Evin prison. Even before her conviction, she had been suffering from a heart condition and joint problems, making it that much more difficult to persevere under the horrific conditions of Evin prisons—where poor sanitary conditions, lack of food, and psychological and physical torture are commonplace. Most prisoners released from Evin have a long, arduous time recovering, and at one point, Maryam was beaten so badly her leg was

broken. We thank the Father for preserving Maryam, and pray for His tender lovingkindness to heal her body, heart, and spirit. Pray for the many believers who continue to languish in prison in Iran, such as Ebrahim Firouzi, who has been on a hunger strike protesting the treatment of Christian prisoners, and those who are ostracized and persecuted by their families and communities. (Source: *Mission Network News*)

Malaysia-- Pastor Raymond Koh, Joshua and Ruth Hilmy (both believers), and Amri Che Mat (a Muslim) were abducted over 200 days ago and have still not been found. The Christians were spreading Christianity in a country that forbids proselytizing to Malay Muslims, but little else is known about their disappearance. Please pray for God's protection and His loving care and comfort for them and their distraught families. Pray that the Muslim Amri who is possibly still with these believers would hear the Gospel and come to salvation. (Source: *Open Doors*)

India/Nepal/Bangladesh—Even as we continue to pray for those suffering in Texas from the effects of Hurricane Harvey, there are now more than 1,000 dead after monsoons and severe flooding devastated huge parts of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Millions more are affected by the ongoing tragic effects of this natural disaster and ensuing crisis. There have been landslides, wiping away tens of thousands of homes and vast swaths of farmland. Pray for those caught in this terrible situation, and pray for governments, community leaders, and NGOs to respond quickly, efficiently, and with wisdom and integrity. Pray also that believers in all these regions of suffering will be God's hands and feet to relieve pain and provide for the needs of those who have experienced great loss, and will be a light and witness to many. (Sources: *BBC*; *CBS*)

Kenya-- Both Muslim and Christian women living in the coastal regions of Kenya have been kidnapped by El-Shabab (a militant group linked to Al Qaeda) and brought to the forests of Somalia to be used as sex slaves. These women were promised jobs, then drugged, brought to Somalia, and kept hidden in remote wooded areas. Raped by multiple men regularly for years, women that have escaped and returned are now severely emotionally and physically wounded, or even plagued with HIV. Pray for God's gentle care and healing for these wounded women. Pray for those that don't know Christ to meet Him as they search for help and healing. Pray also that this militant group would soon be brought to justice and that women still enslaved would be released. (Source: *BBC*)

China—Falsely charged with "subversion of state power," Jiang Tianyong, a Christian who has used his attorney's license to defend victims of China's human rights abuses stood trial at the end of August. Activists within China as well as international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, have all called the trial a sham, indicating a guilty verdict was a foregone conclusion. In an effort to further obfuscate the truth, the Chinese government released an online video where Jiang admits his guilt and says he is sorry and would like a second chance, which all activists are certain is the result of torture. Though Jiang is just the latest in a string of targeted persecution of prominent human rights defenders, the

government-controlled media has concurrently published articles in which so-called academics and experts praise President Xi Jinping for the great strides he has made in upholding the “rule of law” in China. Pray that the truth of Jiang’s case will be widely known and his good name cleared. Pray that the truth about the government’s systematic and horrific repression and persecution of any dissenters will be brought to light. Pray that the truth and love of Christ might continue to spread in China and bring many, including Xi Jinping to a saving knowledge of Jesus. (*Sources: China Aid; The Guardian*)

Morocco-- Christian persecution has increased in Morocco to such an extent that believers must meet secretly in homes to worship. They are legally considered Muslims, must use Muslim names, and may not perform Christian marriages or Christian worship services. When Christian believers spoke out against this religious persecution, a popular Arabic newspaper accused them of apostasy and of being responsible for ISIS. Eerily, it also reminded its readers that the Koran calls on Muslims to kill apostates. Please pray for our fellow believers in Morocco to stand firm and cling to the Gospel of Truth. Pray fervently for their protection, courage, and hope in Jesus Christ and his return. (*Source: International Christian Concern*)

Eritrea—Over the past three months, at least 210 Christians were rounded up by the Eritrean government in the most recent wave of crackdowns on “unauthorized” faiths. Among them was Fikadu Debesay, a young mother of three, who died while in custody, being held in an area notorious for its oppressive heat and aridity. Sadly, this mother is only one among many young women who are believers who are imprisoned for their faith in Eritrea. These women not only endure the harshest of conditions, but they also must endure separation from their children, many of whom are subsequently without any paternal care as their fathers are often imprisoned as well, or are conscripts in the Eritrean army. Pray for the husband of Fikadu Debesay and for her young children that they might find comfort and strength in Jesus and that He will draw them all close to Him. Pray for the many children of believers in Eritrean, who live in fear and under threat, and many of them, without their parents at all. Pray that they would know their Heavenly Father and feel His care and provision for them. Pray for the nation of Eritrea and its government, that many would come to see the light and truth of Christ and turn from sin and darkness to the mercy and salvation He offers. (*Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide*)

Tajikistan-- Pastor Bakhrom Kholmatov of Sonmin Sonbogym Church (which means Good News of Grace) was recently arrested and sentenced to three years in prison. This arrest happened shortly after law enforcement officers raided his church, beat some of the worshippers, and confiscated church supplies. Officials then ordered the church to be closed, and many believers from the church lost their jobs. When officers found Christian songs on Pastor Bakhrom’s computer and the book “More Than a Carpenter” in his home, they declared these to be “extremist materials,” that suggest he planned to threaten to overthrow the government. Pray for help and encouragement for this pastor while in prison, pray for support and strength for his family, and pray that the country of Tajikistan would uphold freedom of religion and reopen its churches. (*Source: Voice of the Martyrs*)