

Pray from 2 Thessalonians 1-

We ought always to give thanks to God for you brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows even greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and afflictions which you endure. This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God for which indeed you are suffering. For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day and to be marveled at among all who have believed...

To this end we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling and fulfill every desire for goodness and work of faith with power in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. 2 Thes 2:16,17

STANDING IN THE GAP

for the Persecuted Church

November, 2017

- 1. SRI LANKA** – pray for **Pastor Sampatu**. He stood up to a mob outside his home and was injured.
- 2. PHILIPPINES** – pray for **the families of believers** who were killed by the Maute group when they passed a check point reportedly placed by terrorists.
- 3. TAJIKISTAN** – pray for **Pastor Bakhtom Kholmatou**, pastor of the Good News of Grace Protestant Church in Khujand. He was arrested and imprisoned in April 2017 after secret police officers raided his church. They also harassed and beat church members. Officials claimed that Christian songs on his computer and his books were 'extremist material'.
- 4. TURKEY** – continue praying for imprisoned US **Pastor Andrew Brunson**. Turkish President Erdogan has for the first time confirmed publicly that he is being held as a political hostage. Erdogan called on the US to exchange Pastor Brunson for Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish citizen living in exile in the US since 1999 who is accused of masterminding last year's failed coup. October 9 was the one-year anniversary of Brunson's imprisonment. A delegation from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom recently visited him in prison. They said he was confined to a cell 24 hours a day and has lost more than 50 pounds since being imprisoned. He thanks people for praying for him.
- 5. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH**
- 6. VIETNAM** – pray for high school student **Hahn**. He is one of several dozen young Vietnamese Christians completing a Bible study on the life of Christ. He has been told to stop evangelizing at his high school, while others have been beaten, imprisoned, and expelled from their villages. The police are offering gangsters money to stop the young Bible students. The gangsters threaten to beat the students if they share the Gospel. But the students have not given up.
- 7. COLOMBIA** – pray for **Leonardo** as he preaches the Gospel despite opposition from the guerrillas and paramilitaries. Pastors are viewed as obstacles to these groups' political ambitions because young people who become Christians are no longer attracted to the groups' violent lifestyles. "There are gangs, hitmen," he said. "Two times they have not let me preach," denying him entrance to the church. So he began preaching outdoors. He first began preaching to young boys but in a short time his outdoor church grew to include 70 adults and 53 children. He is also training others to preach.
- 8. IRAN** – pray for **Ahmed**, who has been a Christian for 2 years and is now printing 100 New Testaments each week. He distributes the Bibles wherever they are requested throughout his country, knowing that God's Word is the light Iranians so desperately need. He has recently been arrested, leaving the 14 churches he has planted without a shepherd.
- 9. INDIA**- pray for **Palani** who was arrested for Bible distributions only a few days after he became a Christian. He spent 2 months in prison where police beat him and demanded to know where he got the Bibles. He was shackled and chained in a prison cell where the heat sometimes exceeded 100 degrees. He saw 3 people die of starvation and poor medical care in the overcrowded prison. After his release, Palani's prayer is to get more Bible training and to be used by God to advance His kingdom – even though he knows it could lead to another arrest.

SOURCES:

CHURCH IN CHAINS; CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE; CHRISTIAN TODAY; OPEN DOORS; PRISONER ALERT; RELEASE INTERNATIONAL; VOICE of the MARTYRS; WORLD MAGAZINE; WORLD WATCH MONITOR

10. **INDIA** – pray for **Swami**. He was handing out New Testaments, praying that those who received them would come to know the Savior revealed on their pages. His efforts came to an abrupt end when members of the RSS, the Hindu nationalist organization and party of PM Modi, began hitting him on the head and back. Then they dragged him to the police station where they filed a report against him. He was finally released. After arriving home, Swami fell unconscious and was rushed to the hospital where he went into a coma. A few days later he suffered a stroke that affected one side of his body.
11. **EGYPT** – praise God that **Marilyn**, a 16 year old Coptic Christian girl kidnapped in June, has been recovered. Her village priest, Father Khalaf, said she had not been treated well but she is “just happy to back with her family.” He continues, “We thank God for answering our prayers and the prayers of many other people.” Her kidnapping was part of a series of disappearances in which Coptic girls were targeted by Islamist networks, who kidnap and force them to convert to Islam and then either marry them off or sell them for large amounts of money.
12. **SYRIA** – pray for Christians in the town of Al-Qaryatayn. Islamic State jihadists have regained control of the town believed to be the home of hundreds of Christian families.
13. **SUDAN** – pray for senior church leader of Sudan Church of Christ, **Mahjoub Abotrin**, who was arrested in Sept when he refused to hand over leadership of the Sudanese denomination to government-appointed officials. Sudanese authorities are engaged in a campaign of intimidation against the country’s Christian minority, which includes gradual confiscation of property.
14. **INDIA** – pray for **5 Pentecostal Christian men and one woman** from Tukupani village in Simdega district who were arrested and jailed following a complaint by the village chief. Their bail application has been rejected. They have been charged with ‘upsetting the religious feelings of others.’
15. **PHILIPPINES** – pray for **Arcadio** who travels to remote villages to share the Gospel and distribute Bibles and other Christian literature. Muslim groups in these areas drive Christians from their homes and farmland. Believers are also endangered by ongoing battles between the government and Muslim militants.
16. **NIGERIA** – pray for **Esther** who lost her husband in an attack by Boko Haram and was left to raise 6 children all on her own. She has been forced to find a way to provide for her family in a society that marginalizes women. Open Doors has helped her start a business and she has been able to feed and house her family and send all of her children to school.
17. **SYRIA and IRAQ** – pray for Christians who have chosen to stay and rebuild after IS destroyed their communities. They ask us to pray that their governments and the United Nations will ensure them: the right to equal citizenship, dignified living conditions, and a prominent role in reconciling and rebuilding society.
18. **MIDDLE EAST** – pray for **Halimah** who works with women struggling in the aftermath of ISIS. She and other women in Iraq and Syria are turning crises created by ISIS into an opportunity to share Jesus. One group of women started a Bible study, another works with people with special needs.
19. **INDONESIA** – pray for **Rouli** who serves in Indonesia’s Batak Protestant Church Filadelfia. Recently an Indonesian official refused to grant the church a permit and ordered the building sealed. Church members were forced to worship in front of their building next to the ditch and streets.
20. **NIGERIA** – pray for **Pastor Kabiru** who cares for a small group of believers in Danbango in Kebbi State. They face constant threats to return to Islam from Muslims. “I have been arrested many times and have been imprisoned three times,” he said. “It is all just an effort to frustrate evangelism.”
21. **EAST JAVA** - pray for **Larasati** who is a coordinator of a house church in a remote village in East Java. She was summoned by the local government who accused her and the house church of illegal proselytizing by distributing food, praying for people and paying school fines. They banned the church’s charitable activities and threatened Larasati with death. “Without adversities, Christians would be living a casual life and making no difference in the world,” she says.
22. **IRAQ** – pray for **Father Thabet** and returning Christians in Karamles. Speaking from his Chaldean Catholic Church which was damaged during the IS occupation but is being restored, he said returning Christians “are here in our own house, our home, our town. The number of returning families increases day to day.” He said this gives him great joy.
23. **HUNGARY** – pray for Hungarian Prime Minister **Viktor Orban**. In October he pledged to support Middle Eastern Christians under threat of being wiped out from the area where Christianity started. Referring to his country’s experience of oppression during the Soviet Union era, he explained why his government has been the first, and so far the only, government to specifically address the persecution of Christians around the world. Orban was speaking at a conference his government was hosting for church leaders from the Middle East, Europe, and the US, along with NGO activists from Canada and Sweden to “Find the Appropriate Answers to a long Neglected Crisis, “that Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world today.”
24. **EGYPT** – continue praying for **Coptic Christians**, especially Coptic priests. Father Samaan Shehata, a 45-year old Coptic orthodox priest, was stabbed to death in October returning to his home in Beni Suet from visiting a family in Cairo. It may well be that he was targeted only for the clothes he was wearing – in Egypt a clear indication of his religious profession.
25. **IRAQ** – pray for peace for the Kurdish people in Iraq, who recently voted in favor of independence from Baghdad. There are Christians who are in favor of the independence; they are found mostly among those living in the Kurdish area. But others are against it.
26. **NIGER** – pray for **Aphodiya Garba Maida**, 17, daughter of a pastor with EERN who was kidnapped by 3 women and 3 men while on her way to school. She was able to use her mobile phone to send a message, saying that she is being held in an unknown location. The kidnapers are likely affiliated with the Islamist group Boko Haram. This appears to be the first targeted kidnapping of a Christian by Boko Haram-affiliated militants in the West African nation.
27. **INDIA** – pray for **Pastor Seviya** who was severely beaten with rods and thick sticks until he became unconscious in October by 5 Hindu extremists.
28. **INDIA** – pray also for **Pastor Khel Prasad Kurre** who was also attacked in October, needing 12 stitches to his head. He was on his way home from visiting a church member when he was attacked by 3 men. Both of these attacks occurred in states led by the BJP, which is the Hindu nationalist party led by Prime Minister Modi.
29. **KAZAKHSTAN** – praise God that **Yklas Kabduakasov** was released from prison in October after serving a two-year sentence for talking with his students about his Christian faith.
30. **TURKEY** – imprisoned **Pastor Andrew Brunson** wrote this worship song in September:

You are worthy, worthy of my all
My tears and pain I lift up as an offering
Teach me to share in the fellowship of Your sufferings
Lamb of God You are worthy of my all.
You are worthy, worthy of my all
Adopted as a son, a brother to my King
Indeed I will share in Your glory if I share Your suffering
Jesus, You are worthy of my all.