

Written prayers

Interceding for – and inspired by – the persecuted church

You can use these prayers to pray for specific individuals or groups of Christians experiencing persecution – or to pray more generally for the persecuted church as a whole. Towards the end of this collection are some prayers that were originally written for specific situations which we have included for general use here, or because it felt important to distribute them because of the heart they share.

You may also be interested in looking at the prayers we have written for people to use when specific individuals are in dangerous situations – whether this is in conflicts or places where persecution is evident:

www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/written_prayers_interceding_for_protection_for_people_in_dangerous_situations.pdf

A gathering prayer remembering our global family

Loving Father,
Head of the body,
Spirit who moves in and through us all;
The God who is one yet three gathered,
We thank you for this chance to meet – with you and with each other.

We praise you that even with just two or three gathered you are there
And that we can come together without fear to worship you freely today.
We thank you for the blessing of each person we see here in this room
And those brothers and sisters we love dearly who can't be with us today.
And we remember those we have never seen but are still part of our family –
especially those who cannot gather where they are today –
For fear of persecution, imprisonment for faith or isolation on the run.
Remind them that they are not alone and inspire us all with the truth
that alone or together –
Christ Jesus, in you we are gathered still.

And so in this congregation of billions
with our cloud of witnesses and host of angels.
We joyfully bring you our praise.
And delight in your presence today.
Loving Father,
Head of the body,
Spirit who moves in and through us all;
The God who is one yet three gathered.

A prayer of thanksgiving for the grace that is expressed in the midst of persecution

Omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent God
We thank you that even our most impressive words
Can't capture your scale or your reach.

Thank you for every brother and sister you are close to today;
For those you are guiding; and those you are hiding;
For the testimonies we marvel at and the stories we never hear;
For the persecuted you bless with the kingdom of heaven
And the rescued you save with your miraculous hand.
For the peace that you give in the midst of the fear
And the truth you reveal to a new depth in pain.

Even here, we have reason to praise.
Even here, we see your transforming grace.
And even in death, there truly is gain.

Prayers for protection, provision and perseverance

Canon Andrew White (known as the Vicar of Baghdad) asks us to pray these 3 P's – and so we do...

A simple prayer

Saving God, a dear brother who inspires,
challenges and suffers in equal measures
has asked me to pray for protection, provision and perseverance.

And so I do.
For him, his people
and all Christians suffering persecution today.

Keep this simple prayer on my lips many times
today and always until you return
and your whole body is brought home to suffer no more.
Or until you call me home and my work here is done.

The three P's unpacked in prayer

Lord, please provide safety and shelter;
divine protection that surrounds and engulfs.
Place babies in the arms of their mothers
and children by the side of their fathers.

By your word, please feed them;
multiply food and resources to satisfy all.
And from the fires of oppression,
draw out red hot poker
who will mark the world with love.

A prayer for the weak, the doubting and the frightened

Lord, in my heart and mind the persecuted church are heroes of the faith.
Holier than me; more like you than me; closer to you than me.

Lord, in reality many of the persecuted church are heroes of the faith.
More surrendered than me; sharing in your suffering more than me; revealing your glory more than me.

But Lord, today I'm on my knees for the ones that are struggling to persevere.
Those who doubt like me; fear like me; worry like me.

Lord, today I'm remembering those other stories I've heard –
Of the pastor's teenage son doubting you're real because his father's been in jail for so long,
Of the church leader saying we're not ready, we don't really believe the word,
Of those who feel too weak to stand and not deny your name.
Of those who are terrified and cannot say they feel peace beyond understanding yet.

Lord, in your heart and mind is each and every one;
You came to find them; suffered for them; and now you watch over them constantly.

Lord, make each one a hero of the faith able to overcome;
to grow in trust, cling to your presence and one day hear like me in all my frailties:

“Well done good and faithful servant. You're home. You can rest precious child, you can rest.”

Blessing prayer inspired by Psalm 67

**All: May God be gracious to us and bless us
 and make his face shine on us –
 so that your ways may be known on earth,
 your salvation among all nations.**

Leader: Heavenly Father, we lift to you today our brothers and sisters who are suffering for their faith in you.
 Those who are forced to flee; those who are forced to hide;
 those who are forced to choose death over life for the sake of your name.
 Father – be with your children today:
 protect, provide, encourage and save.

**All: May God be gracious to them and bless them
 and make his face shine on them –
 so that your ways may be known on earth,
 your salvation among all nations.**

Leader: Heavenly Father, we lift to you today our brothers and sisters who are choosing to love others more than themselves.
 Those who are sharing what little they have; those who are helping neighbours despite danger; those who are loving their enemies even in the face of violence and death.
 Father – be with your children today:
 protect, provide, encourage and save.

**All: May God be gracious to them and bless them
 and make his face shine on them –
 so that your ways may be known on earth,
 your salvation among all nations.**

Leader: Heavenly Father, we lift to you today our brothers and sisters who are risking everything to share your good news.
 Those who stand firm when threats are made; those who proclaim your goodness in the midst of hostility; those who value the life of one saved over a thousand days of their own future.
 Father – be with your children today:
 protect, provide, encourage and save.
 And use their example to humble, challenge and inspire us all.

**All: May God be gracious to us all and bless his whole church
 and make his face shine on each one of us –
 so that your ways may be known on earth,
 your salvation among all nations.**

A prayer for wisdom and revelation

All-knowing and all-seeing God,
Compassionate Father and grieving Lord,
Pour out your wisdom and revelation today:
that the persecuted might know whether to stay or flee
And where to go and who to trust;
that the politicians and church leaders might know how to lead
And what policies and plans will bring safety, transformation and peace;
that the persecutors might come to know what they do
and have a Damascus road turning back to you.

A prayer for forgiveness

Lord Jesus, I wonder if maybe the hardest part of following you
is not even the dying to self daily, or the potential of dying itself for you one day
But the loving of those who wish death or bring death on others.
Oh Lord, help me to forgive those who hate my brothers and sisters
And help my brothers and sisters to forgive them too.
It's only in your strength any of us can do this
so help us – pure and crucified Lord – to forgive like you did.
And to forgive like you do.

A prayer for persecutors

Powerful Lord,
the psalmists said “awake” and “arise”
To defend your own
and destroy those who attack.
But you taught us your upside-down way.
And so I pray “awake” and “arise”
to pursue those who attack
and crumble them to their knees.
Lord Jesus, in your mercy
Crush their hearts with the weight of your love for them
And bring them to the freedom of repentance and faith.
I long for persecution to end because the persecutors themselves have been undone –
By a revelation of the living Lord and the worth of each of his own.
But if they refuse your prompts and still harden their hearts –
and please Lord let it not come to this – then Lord,
“awake” and “arise” with justice and might
and overcome their regimes in your righteous way and your perfect timing.

Wrestling prayers

An upside down prayer

Saviour; defender; rescuer and Lord,
I'm praying for protection physically –
For things to change circumstantially.
For natural, earthly safety for my brothers and sisters.
Today.

Are these upside-down prayers?
Is it still in suffering you shine the brightest?

Does persecution remain the way that brings the most to you
In the truest, deepest, most precious walks?
Always?

I know the overcoming that matters most.
I know the faithful can never lose in you.
And I pray for this too – for them to cling on whatever comes.
For more to see you through them and for abundant life for them.
Now and eternally.

But I am still flesh and blood
thinking of flesh and blood like me
And I can't help but keep wrestling for this lesser overcoming
that still means the world to me.
Today.

A prayer in the face of suffering

Lord, is it rescue your heart yearns to give us?
Is it a way out?
Is it a parachute to land us to safety?

Or is it this agony?
This suffering?
This deprivation, danger and doubt?

We choose to stand close to you
So we see your wounds and scars –
worn for our sakes.
We see the spitting, the hatred,
The cruelty and the crucifixion.

We sense a shame for the times we pray for ease,
we sense shame that we want comfort...

You said in the world we would have trouble.
You said "Fear not – I have overcome the world".

So we come.
Take us in our circumstances today;
And simply let us walk with you.
Let us see your way of behaving in suffering.

And as we suffer,
May we see you risen in glory,

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A conquering King –
The defeater of death.

Let us shine to the persecutors around us.
Let us be your light in the world –
In the darkest of places.

Banish fear.
Banish doubt.

WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS IN THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS.

What I want to pray

Lord, I'm in that place again
Torn between praying
"Your kingdom come; your will be done"
And simply "turn this around now. Please."

I'm struggling to see answered prayer and rescue
With any other perspective than the earthly one.
I want safety.
I want peace.
I want freedom to worship for my brothers and sisters.
I want dramatic rescue to point to you
Rather than perseverance under persecution to shine.

And so I long – like you – for the end of all these tears,
This pain, this injustice, this death.
How much more than me must you long for your children to be safe?
And yet you work out this longing in a greater way than I could understand.

Help me to know more deeply that I can trust you;
that to pray "Your kingdom come, your will be done"
is to pray, "Father bring true safety to as many of your children as will accept it."
And to desire the cup to pass from each one at risk
is something you more than understand.

A prayer of solidarity - #We are "N" and also...

*This prayer was written in July 2014 in response to a very specific situation in Iraq but interceding wider as a result.
For a fuller context, read the blog entry it was originally written in here -*

<http://journey.thesanctuarycentre.org/2014/07/24/a-prayer-wearen-but-also/>

Lord Jesus of Nazareth,
We are 'N'
and we are crying out to you.
This has to stop.
Surely you will make this stop.
Please Lord, make this stop.

Lord Jesus of Nazareth,
we are a body crying out to its head;
the ultimate Nazarene.
You are 'N'
and it is your name we bear -
whether in joyful choice or desecrating hostility.

Lord Jesus of Nazareth,
write 'N' on our hearts indelibly
for we say "#WeAreN"
but we forget, care too little or are scared to speak
As if our hand hadn't been cut off
Or our foot chased from its resting place.

Lord Jesus of Nazareth,
make us a true 'N' that prays, fasts, mourns, acts
for our brothers and sisters
in Mosul, wider Iraq and Syria.
And everywhere family is imprisoned
abused, mocked, killed or taunted.

Lord Jesus of Nazareth,
that type of 'N' sounds more like you
who gave your life for the love of us.
That 'N' is what we would be known for
- ready to die to self for the love of *us* -
for the love of 'N' and the love of you.

Lord Jesus of Nazareth,
speed our sometimes feeble-kneed standing-alongside comfort
and your perfect understanding-defying peace
to those who are threatened for 'N' today.
And deliver, please deliver through your Spirit's power -
and through us, who must be the hands and feet for 'N'.

But also...

Lord Jesus of Nazareth,
There is so much more than 'N' to plead for;
Those grouped under 'M' who also face terror,
Those writing 'N' to protect their neighbours,
Those brandishing 'I' in desperate need of softening;
So many letters and labels but all loved and in need of your peace.

Lord Jesus of Nazareth,
nations of many names are in uproar
and kingdoms rise and fall.
And all we manage is to cry out to you and shakily try to make this stand.
But we are still 'N' and we will remain in your name
for you will be exalted and your peace will come.

Meditation – A Father's delight in his children

On 18 August 2014, in morning worship, one of our pray-ers was praying about the persecution being experienced in Iraq and other nations in the Middle East Region particularly, when he felt a sense of the Father's joy and delight. He said it sounded almost crass to say it, but that in that moment, he wished he was with the persecuted church rather than here. This is what he felt led to write in response.

I see your faithful witness;
I will not let my people perish.
My strong right arm withstands
the heavy blows
of the hammer of darkness.

Hand your enemies to me.

Fathers – hold the hands of your children;
There will be a generation raised in this place
who will be known for their joy.
Destruction cannot hold them back;
Their singing and shouting will be
Music to my ears.

They will carry those who are trapped
in bitterness and regret.
They will be strong enough to carry
the burdens of their city.
Their witness will cross mountain passes
And will reach the city of light.