

Around the world, many believers are persecuted, imprisoned—even killed—for their faith. Since Jesus laid down His life, **43 million Christians have become martyrs.**

Right now 200 million people, 60 percent of whom are children, face persecution for believing in Jesus, according to Christians in Crisis International Ministry, a prayer advocacy ministry for persecuted believers.

November 6 and 13 have been designated as International Days of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. Over the next week, please remember to pray for believers throughout the world who are suffering violence, oppression, displacement, and family rejection because of their faith.

Because the New Testament was written to persecuted believers, it is filled with examples of how to pray for our brothers and sisters under attack. Here are five examples from Ephesians on how to intercede for persecuted believers:

- That they would know the hope God gives (Ephesians 1:18)
- That the Holy Spirit would strengthen them (Ephesians 3:16)
- That those under attack would know how much God loves them (Ephesians 3:17)
- That they would know how to share the gospel (Ephesians 6:19)
- That they would fearlessly tell others about Jesus (Ephesians 6:20)

Hope is one of the Three Great Treasures of the human heart: "Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love" (1 Cor 13:13).

A life without faith has no meaning;

a life without love simply isn't worth living;

but a life without hope is a dark cavern from which you never escape.

These things aren't simply "virtues." Faith, hope and love are mighty forces.

And hope is the cornerstone; the fate of the other two depend upon hope's resilience:

... we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus

and of the love you have for all God's people

—the faith and love **that spring from hope...** (Col 1:3-5)

Isn't that surprising—both our faith and our love "spring from" or "result from" our hope.

But of course.

Hopelessness makes it impossible to care.

Without hope faith is just a doctrine gathering dust on our shelves. The highest things that make a heart worth having and a life worth living—they rise or fall upon the condition of our hope. Which makes hope the mightiest force of all (love is the noblest; hope is the linchpin.)

It would be good to pause and ask yourself, *How is my hope these days?* The answer may be startling to you.

Because it is such a very precious thing, you want to be careful with your hope. So much of the disheartening and devastation that the soul endures comes from misplaced hopes.

Hope is one of your heart's greatest treasures; it is a dangerous thing to let your hope go wandering.

1. Anchor your HOPE to a GOD who is working before you show up - Acts 18: 9-11
Paul is in a tough situation. Opposition is simmering up. The pot of persecution is getting ready to boil over. Paul needs HOPE and God offers it –
God is with you.
God will protect you.
God will use you to connect His people to Him. **God has people in this city Paul cannot see yet but he can know they are there.**

2. Anchor your HOPE to a God of GROWTH - 1 Cor 3:5-11
Paul is writing years later to the church that sprang out of his witness in Acts 18. They are in internal melt down. Unity is weak; division is strong... there are groups – the church has become WE and THEM.. not US... Paul reminds them -
 - 1) We are just servants carrying out assignments
 - 2) God gives the growth
 - 3) We need each other to accomplish the task. God does not give any one person all of the gifts needed to build the church.

3. Anchor your HOPE to a God who dresses you – Isaiah 61:10-11
Now go back in time. A nation in exile for 70 years because of hardness of heart and worship of false gods. They abandoned God so he put them in time-out. YET – God holds out hope... It is based on how God sees – even his rebellious children. They are dressed like a groom, they are like a bride adorned and blessed.

Conclusion: A Prayer of HOPE!

Good Morning God.

Thank you Spirit of God for being in me and for working all through the night.

Forgive me for all of my sins through Jesus so I can start fresh & clean this day.

From long ago, my table & cup was set perfectly for today. You carefully allowed all my interruptions, events, delays and health for today. Help me to receive it with joy. I know it's for your greater good and for my sanctification.

I recognize this day that my body is a Temple of your Spirit. **Welcome.**

I engage the Spirit of God's thoughts, love, presence & power into all of my thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons and situations so I can be obedient to you in them. As a result, I expect to outflow God's supernatural actions in all the little & big things of this day.

As you powerfully work through my life, help me to take credit like that of a mailman for the delivery of your many 'wins & trophies' that unfold today. Help me properly reflect the source of the 'gifts' which is you as I deliver them. Please help me to do this well.

In Jesus' name I can pray boldly to my heavenly Father, even when I feel unworthy or physically don't feel like it. Amen.