

## **ACTION: INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

### **Advocacy to the Highest Authority**

*“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God . . . praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints” (from Ephesians 6:12–18 ESV).*

A spiritual battle involving spiritual forces necessitates the use of spiritual weapons. And though the weapons of Ephesians 6—truth, righteousness, preparedness to witness, faith, assurance of salvation, the word of God, and prayer—might not seem like much, they “have divine power to destroy strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:3–4).

Far from being a benign religious duty, a traditional formality, or an inappropriate interruption, true intercessory prayer is:

- advocacy to the highest authority,
- serious business in the courts of the Lord,
- spiritual warfare, and,
- radical faith in action.

We *must* have a higher view of the serious business of intercessory prayer!

### **We Are Called to Pray for the Persecuted**

*“Let brotherly love continue . . . Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body” (Hebrews 13:1, 3 ESV).*

*(Image: Survivors emerge after the bombing of All Saint Church, Peshawar. Sept 2013)*



Suffering, anxious, persecuted believers are exceedingly vulnerable to spiritual attack. “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). And who better to stalk than a grief-stricken, confused, utterly exhausted, wounded believer? When we intercede, we interpose ourselves between the devil and his prey.

Forget the glorified images of great heroes of the faith; persecuted believers need all the prayer support they can get.

### **We are Called to Pray for the Persecutors**

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I [Jesus] say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may*

*be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* (Matt 5:43–45a. See also, Luke 6:27–28, Romans 12:14).

*(Image: relatives of one of the Copts [Christian indigenous Egyptians] martyred on a Libyan beach by Islamic State militants weep for their lost loved one. Feb 2015)*

We need to pray that persecutors will be restrained, that they will come under conviction of sin, and that the God of all grace will open their hearts to receive the gospel.

We also need to pray that the Holy Spirit will enable the persecuted to love, forgive and pray for those who persecute them. This is really important, for grace is not only a powerful witness, it is a powerful healer.



### **We are Called to Pray for World Leaders**

*“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:1–4 ESV).

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Virtually all Christian aid and advocacy groups that serve the persecuted church also provide resources for prayer. Some send printed newsletters and prayer calendars, and virtually all send news and prayer requests via email. Further to this, Christian media organizations now exist for the purpose of reporting the religious (Christian) news the secular media ignores; some even specialize in reporting persecution. The Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin (RLPB), which I (Elizabeth Kendal) publish each week, is designed to facilitate informed and strategic intercessory prayer.

The information is out there; in fact these days, it is actually quite easy to be very well informed for the purpose of intercessory prayer.