

Revival & REFORMATION

The Official *United in Prayer* Weekly Blog and World Church Prayer Requests
www.RevivalAndReformation.org

November 12, 2021

Preparing for Persecution!

By Melody Mason

From the time I was a little girl, I remember my parents talking to me about the trials and persecution that will come upon God's people in the last days. I remember reading the stories of Christian martyrs like the Waldenses, John Wycliffe, Huss and Jerome, and others who faithfully stood for Jesus and paid the ultimate sacrifice in giving up their lives. Their undaunted courage and faith inspired me, and I've always prayed that God would give me that same courage to stand for my faith, no matter the cost. However, for most of my life here in the West, I've been surrounded by peace, not persecution. I never really thought about what it might look like to suffer for my faith. But in the recent months, things have begun to change. Things that have made me question my own spiritual readiness.

There are questions we should all be asking these days. Questions like, "Am I truly ready for the overwhelming surprise that is soon to break upon the world? Am I prepared to stand strong for Jesus when I'm falsely accused, and when the whole world seems against me?"

A few months ago, as I have thought about my weak spots and my need for more endurance and spiritual fortitude, I started praying very fervently that God would prepare me for the coming crisis, and that He would specifically prepare me to stand strong in the face of religious persecution. Well, be careful what you pray for because you just might get it!

Suddenly things started happening in my life that I never expected. Suddenly I found myself being stretched as never before, in situations, not of my making, where I began to experience some painful and rather unexpected religious persecution. While I was seeking to serve the Lord and stay faithful to His Word, my whole world was turned upside down. Some turned against me and tried to get others to turn against me as they told me that I was crazy because of my strange "Adventist" beliefs. Relationships that I had previously enjoyed were severed. Why? Simply because I was a committed Seventh-day Adventist Christian.

"Lord, why are these things happening?" I cried. "It makes no sense. I haven't done anything to merit these attacks!" Then one day it hit me. Hadn't I been praying to be strong? God was answering my prayer by allowing me a small glimpse of what it's like to be persecuted for righteousness sake. He was also showing me my own weaknesses and my desperate need for more of Him.

Why should we ever be surprised by persecution and trials? The Bible says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing

happened unto you” (1 Peter 4:12). What I should be surprised about is that I haven’t experienced more religious persecution sooner. This should surprise us all, actually!

“The apostle Paul declares that ‘all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.’ 2 Timothy 3:12. Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world’s standard and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 48).

I believe that God is waking up His people in mercy by these small trials so that we will be prepared for what is soon to come. Spiritual persecution is increasing on all fronts, and it’s getting closer and closer to home. Rather than being fearful, let’s rejoice and lift up our heads, knowing that our redemption is near. Remember, the same God who gave courage and strength to the early church martyrs will give us strength as well, *when we need it* (Deuteronomy 33:25). But we need to prepare ourselves and our families. How? By preparing our hearts!

“Christians should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise, and this preparation they should make by diligently studying the Word of God and striving to conform their lives to its precepts” (*Last Day Events*, p. 66). “None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict” (*Ibid.*).

You see, the key to preparing to die in the future is learning to die today. Daily we die to self, to our agenda, to our dreams and plans, to the tug of the world. Daily we seek to live only for Christ. Then, as we study His Word, lay up His promises in our hearts (this is the best stockpiling!), and learn to live by faith through prayer (spending much time in prayer, wrestling for the salvation of others), we will grow stronger and stronger, clinging to Jesus. The days ahead aren’t going to be easy. Let’s not whitewash reality. But God promises He will see us through whatever storms we face if we cling to Him. Let’s not wait until we are in the storm to learn these lessons of faith and trust. Let’s learn them today! It’s time to get ready. Jesus is coming soon!

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World Church Prayer Requests

November 12 - 18, 2021

- Pray for faith and strength to stand strong for Jesus, and strong for the truths of God's Word, no matter what we face in the coming days as believers.
- Pray for the believers in Haiti as there is so much turmoil. Pray for the missionaries and others who have been kidnapped, to be released safely.
- Pray for the Dhofari Arabs. A popular craft of the 133,000 Dhofari Arabs of Oman is making *majmars* (incense burners), and frankincense is harvested in large amounts every year. Only 0.45% of this people group are Christians. Let us pray that the others come to know of Christ's love for them.
- Pray for health and healing to the many who are still sick and struggling with Covid.