

idop  
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER  
FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

*Devotionals*

IDOP

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER



**Blessed are the Persecuted**


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**7th and 14th November 2021**

# ABOUT THE IDOP

Today, more than 300 million Christians around the world live in places where they face persecution. This includes harassment, detention, legal restrictions, violence and even death for their faith in Jesus. The Bible tells us that we should pray for those who are mistreated as if we ourselves are mistreated (Heb. 13:3) and that if one member of the body suffers, we all suffer (1 Cor. 12:26). For more than two decades, the World Evangelical Alliance has organised the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP), as a global event that unites millions of Christians in prayer for the persecuted Church. Annually, the IDOP is observed on either the first or second Sunday of November, depending on your convenience and choice.

For more information visit: [www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org)



*Mourning turned into laughter  
(Isa. 61:3)*

**Dr. Josephine K. Mutuku Sesi**

We live in a world full of troubled and sorrows and these affects Christians physically, spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically. Christians cry for justice, and in helplessness sometimes they mourn with no one to comfort them.

This hopelessness is not a new thing. Israelites, God's chosen nation underwent the same situation. God promised to send them His anointed one whose mission was, "To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3).

This is a message of future hope which Jesus declared as fulfilled in Him (Luke 4:17-21). Jesus, the anointed One was sent to redeem men from sin and destroy all the works of Satan, the one who sometimes makes Christians mourn.

Jesus triumphed over Satan and his works on the cross.

Jesus' mission on earth is:

To console those who mourn in Zion, (the dwelling of God's people), just as Christians are God's chosen people today (1 Peter 2:9). He is able and willing to comfort his people as they cry to him (Matt. 7:7).

To give them beauty for ashes: It was the custom of those days to use ashes when in great mourning. Job, when he lost everything, and his body was in pain sat mourning in ashes (Job 2:7-8). After all the pain, God gave Job beauty (cheerfulness) for ashes because he trusted in Him (Job 42: 12-16). Many Christians lie ugly and angry in ashes with heavy hearts. God is willing to pick them up and give them cheerfulness instead of spirit of heaviness.

To give them oil of joy for mourning: Oil makes faces shine. Jesus Christ is willing to remove all sadness and replace it with joy (Matt. 6:17). Christians are given oil of gladness, the Holy Spirit in their hearts upon receiving Jesus as LORD and Saviour and get healed spiritually, but not necessarily physically. However, the assurance for eternal comfort should strengthen us in midst of sufferings in this evil world (Rev. 1:17).

To give them garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness: During thanksgiving, priests wore beautiful garments. Christ's comfort brings joy and thankfulness to God even in midst of troubles (Phil. 4:4).

Christ is the true vine and Christians are branches (Jn. 15:1). Christians are to bear fruit-fruit that will last" (Jn. 15:16) for the LORD to be glorified.

Christ' mission is an offer for those who accept it, those who thirst after Him and seek Him with all their heart. Those who refuse the offer remain captives of Satan (John 3:36).

Are you mourning because the suffering has been too much? I encourage you not to give up in loving and serving God. A time is coming when your mourning will be turned into laughter. What a day, glorious day that it will be! This is what I long for. How about you?



*Don't stand in silence*

**John Langlois**

"Don't just stand there, do something!" said my mother after she had asked me to do some household chores. She was busy. She needed help. I was just standing there doing nothing. I wanted to do something else, not what she demanded of me.

Sometimes God must think the same about us, his children. He has made it very plain in His Word what he wants us to do as His disciples. He has commanded us to go into a hostile world to bear witness to him, in both word and deed. Sometimes our words are the best expression of our witness. At other times our deeds are more eloquent and persuasive. Usually, it is both. In each case our words and our actions break the silence as we point others to the Master. Jesus has told us that the fields are white and ready to harvest and yet the labourers are few.

In Matthew 25: 31-46 we see clearly that active Christian service is not optional. When Jesus comes again, He will judge us according to what we have done during our lifetime. Just as Jesus condemned the

man who had been given just one talent who hid it in the ground, in the same way He will condemn all those who “just stand there in silence” and do not obey his Great Commission. These verses show us that sometimes we are blind to the opportunities which stare us in the face. There are those all around us who are hungry or thirsty, whether physical or spiritual, like the woman at the well. We are commanded to give them food and drink, just as Jesus gave living water to the woman in Samaria. Do we minister to those who are in prison, or strangers, or those with other needs? Depending on what we do in our lifetime Jesus will categorise us either as sheep or goats. That sounds shocking to those of us who place our salvation on faith in Christ alone, without works. We believe quite rightly that when we put our trust in Christ and trust him for our salvation by His death on the cross our salvation is assured. Our salvation is indeed completely secure – but not our eternal reward. If our love for Christ is real, it will demonstrate itself in sacrificial service. James tells us that faith without works is dead. Dead faith! Is almost a paradox.

Although we must not stand in silence, we certainly must stand on the firm foundation of Christ alone. When we are persecuted, like the seed falling on rocky ground in the parable of the sower, we will wither and die (Matthew 13: 20). The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no firm foundation, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes, they quickly fall away. To witness effectively in persecution, we must stand on the firm foundation of our Rock, Jesus Christ.





*In this World You Will Have Tribulation*

**Rev. Dr. Aiah Foday-Khabenje**



A common slogan in the church in Africa is: "Jesus is the answer". However, it is not always clear what the question is. We may have various presuppositions, mostly about human flourishing and as portrayed by so called prosperity preachers. Our hitching ears tend to hear, what our hearts desire. In this reflection, I want to call our attention to the SIN, SHAME and SUFFERING question for which Jesus is the answer:

**SIN** - we may know or believe that Jesus died for our sins and the sins of the whole world (John 3:16). The just recompense for sin is death. Jesus Christ, like no other, laid down his life for the sins of humans, and all who by faith, trust him as Lord of their lives are saved from eternal damnation (Rom. 6:23).

That means even people committing heinous crimes and cruelty like ISIS can be saved and transformed to be followers of Jesus. St Paul was like an ISIS commando and no wonder he referred to himself as worst of sinners (1Tim 1:15). This statement was not just said in humility; Paul was known for heinous crimes before his encounter with Jesus. He was transformed from being a persecutor of the Church to the greatest activist and champion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A hardened criminal on the cross believed in Jesus and was granted eternal life in heaven with Jesus.

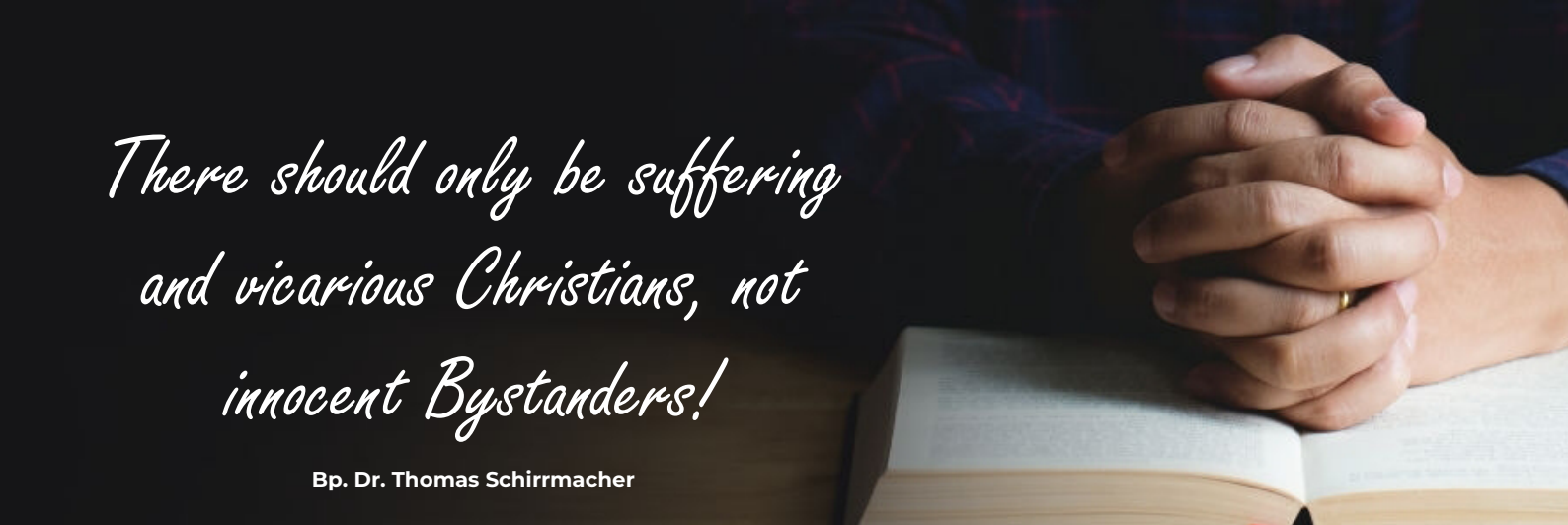
**SHAME** - The means to our salvation was the death of Jesus on the wooden cross, a symbol of shame. Shame was an immediate consequence of human failure. Adam and Eve felt ashamed when they disobeyed God (Gen. 3:7-10). Shame exposes our nakedness, our ugliness, our deceptive hearts, foolishness, and wickedness. Our sins are exposed for all to see. Sin alienates us from God in shame.

Christ bore our shame on the cross (Heb. 12:2). Crucifixion was reserved for the scum of society, slaves, hardened criminals, and enemies of the state. It was considered too horrible and degrading. The preferred means of execution was beheading. Cross was a vulgar word and not used in polite company. On the cross, Jesus experienced such a shame to cover the shame of humanity (1Cor 1:24). Jesus took on our shame of disobedience and reconciles us with God, the Father.

**SUFFERING** -The origin of human suffering is the fall, a consequence of SIN. Suffering and pain are evil and can no way be romanticized. It is natural to pray: "this is not my portion as a child of the most High God". However, when we go through suffering and persecution it does not mean it is as direct result of our sins.

Suffering is a harsh reality of our walk with Jesus. Jesus foretells that followers will be persecuted on this world (John 16:33; 2 Tim 3: 12). On the cross, Jesus personally experienced the full range of human suffering. Jesus still bears the scars of his wounds even in his resurrected and glorified body and have become his identifying marks (John 20:20-29).

Healing of pains happens at the cross of Jesus; forgiving those who have wronged us, loving our enemies, and offering our wounds to God. The Cross tells us that God in Christ is one with us in our suffering (Phil. 1:12-14; 3:10-11). When we suffer, God doesn't stand off, aloof and unconcerned, unable, or unwilling to get involved. Jesus did not just suffer and die for us, but he did rise from the dead. In a way rose for us and gave us access to that resurrection power. By Christ's wounds at the Cross we are healed.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands clasped together in a prayerful gesture, resting on an open book. The hands are positioned on the right side of the frame, with fingers interlaced. The book is open, showing its pages. The background is dark and out of focus.

# *There should only be suffering and vicarious Christians, not innocent Bystanders!*

**Bp. Dr. Thomas Schirmacher**

Hebrews 10:32-35: "Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded."

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews seeks to embolden his readers in times of suffering so that they are reminded of how God helped them in earlier times of suffering (verse 32).

What is truly interesting in this text, however, is that the Letter to the Hebrews designates all readers as such, as those who have "endured in the great contest in the face of suffering", independent of whether this occurred through suffering or through vicarious association with suffering! The author of the Letter to the Hebrews puts the sufferers (A) and those demonstrating compassion

(B) on the same footing. In verses 33-34, the following is said about the cross: ABBA.

In verse 33, the readers are first of all addressed as those who in part have 'themselves' endured much suffering (A), but "at other times" also suffered because they in some cases "stood side by side with those who suffered" (B). There are, then, direct sufferers (A) and sufferers who are in that position because they suffer alongside others (B)!

In verse 34 the situation is reversed: To start with, it is mentioned that the readers have suffered with those in prison (B). Then it is mentioned that they themselves lost possessions (A).

That is precisely the objective of IDOP. Christians who suffer and Christians who stand side by side with those suffer seek to build a 'community' of suffering. Prayer occurs simultaneously in countries where there is Christian persecution and where there is no persecution of Christians. If we do this, then we "do not throw away our confidence," and this confidence "will be richly rewarded" (verse 35).

A Christian never lives without Christian persecution! Either he is persecuted, or he suffers with the fate of those who are persecuted. And whoever suffers, suffers at the same time with others who perhaps suffer even more! The possibility that someone simply ignores the suffering of another individual or church and then enjoys the fact that things are going well for him, without this turning into thankful involvement for the sake of others, is something which does not even come to mind to the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews! For Christians to suffer and for other Christians to not suffer side by side? Unthinkable! Christians who look away while others suffer? Inconceivable! And yet this is precisely what applies to the large majority of Christians!

The International Day of Prayer (IDOP) is a good opportunity to end this situation here and now, to inform yourself about the global situation of the body of Christ, and at least through prayer to have 'fellowship' with those who suffer.

# *Remember their chains*

Dr. Brian Stiller



“Remember their chains” comes from the Apostle Paul’s reminder to Christians in Colossae, “remember my chains.”

Why do we even need to be reminded? Not unlike Jesus’ call to remember to visit those in prison. Prisons, shut us off from those society deems undesirable. Closing them off physically does the same to us: we stop thinking about them – “out of sight out of mind” really works.

It takes effort to remember one in prison, be they there for justifiable reasons or for because of their faith. Thus, the brilliance of the IDOP – International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church – a vital moment to remember, pray and intercede for our brothers and sisters.

Persecution may for some be an inconvenience or insult, but for too many followers of Jesus, it does more than diminish acceptance in their community, it too often leads to physical intimidation and suffering.

The IDOP has for years, alerted us to the need to constructively think and pray. The IDOP for the Persecuted Church is a lifeline from us to those suffering anywhere from emotional and physical harassment even to death.

For the apostle, his request that he be remembered was more than a feel nice “I miss you.” It was a call to pray, an exercise God calls us to use as we engage with the Spirit. So remarkable, isn't it, that the sovereign Creator, God of all that is, King and Lord invites us to be part of his activity on this planet? Prayer is not passive, but engaging, as intercessors, persuasive, intense and focused, asking specifically for those we know or have been told about.

The IDOP is a timely and strategic resource, yes for us – so we know whom to pray for –but specifically for those who need our prayer.

May this one-Sunday-a-year prayer for the persecuted become part of our praying consistently throughout the year.  
... remembering those in chains, today, each day.



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