



Dear Praying Friends in Europe,

A Church in Europe That Stands!

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:11-12 NIV

Christendom is over. Christian Europe is no more. Forget it. Although Europe has a huge Christian heritage, and hopefully a stronger Christian future, at the moment we are a godly minority in an ungodly society. Those who really follow Jesus are always going to be in the minority, but in the past we were still respected, whereas now we are seen as strange, even extreme. I realise that I am speaking more from a Western-European perspective and that in parts of Central and Eastern Europe this is much less the case, but still I believe it is a helpful subject for us to think and pray about.

Persecution of Christians is increasing slowly in Europe, but we should not be shocked or worried by this. The Bible mentions it a lot. Jesus said, *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33 NIV)

We should decide to stand firm in our faith, commit to the whole Bible, follow the Holy Spirit and endure whatever suffering comes our way, confident that we will get a reward in heaven. Yes, there are rewards in heaven!

How Can We Prepare?

I was privileged to listen to Andrew Brunson, an American missionary who was in prison in Turkey for two years. During the first year he broke under the pressure and after that God rebuilt him. He now feels an urgency for Christians in the West to prepare for a coming wave of hostility. Search for his book "God's Hostage" or his online talks "Prepare to Stand."



We cannot know exactly what form this hostility or persecution might take. Maybe it is unlikely that we would be tortured and executed; but prison, financial penalties and 'cancelling' seem very possible. (Cancelling = for example, your bank closes your bank account and credit card, or your professional organisation cancels your membership.)

We cannot prepare fully, but we can make sure we are not unprepared spiritually. We should have a strong prayer life, know the Bible, memorise verses, fast regularly (at least one meal a week), practise listening to the Lord's voice and obeying. In summary, know the Lord!

Prepare to stand firm. Whatever opposition comes, He will be with us, that He has promised. Prepare to stand. Then our faith and our churches will be purified, and a purified church may even be a necessary step before revival!

Of course it is not pleasant – prison is difficult and cancelling must be very stressful and inconvenient – we must be prepared to help each other. But also, we can expect miracles of provision and protection. When God's people are suffering and cry out to Him, He acts to help them. That is the testimony of the suffering church worldwide.

I am not trying to bring fear, but to encourage a spirit of power, love and self-discipline! (2 Timothy 1:7) I am not saying that all this will definitely happen, but we must be prepared. It could happen! Prepare yourself to stand and pray that your church will stand.

How to Pray for Ourselves and the Church?

1. Don't assume you are strong enough to stand, ask the Lord what else you should do to prepare
2. Pray for our church leaders, that we will not compromise in order to avoid opposition from the wider society. Sadly, some churches may compromise, so pray that as many churches as possible will stand firm on Biblical values.
3. Pray for revival to follow!

Israel/Gaza

Yesterday, South Africa took a case to the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of genocide. South Africa's lawyers presented their case, saying that Israel's intent in Gaza is genocidal, claiming Israel had a plan to "destroy" Gaza. Today Israel has been making its response, accusing South Africa of putting before the court a profoundly distorted factual and legal picture. Israel has pointed out that Hamas has sought to maximise harm not only to Israelis but also to Palestinians, while Israel has sought to minimise loss of life and saying that any loss is tragic. Israel's prime minister said yesterday that "Today we saw an upside-down world. Israel is accused of genocide while it is fighting against genocide".

Further Prayer:-

1. "De-risking from China". Europe's governments and companies are considering how they can make sure they are not too dependent on China and hence vulnerable. Pray for a wise relationship with China, without demonising the country, but being aware that it has a very different agenda.
2. As we work on this edition of Canopy, early this morning, the USA and UK have taken direct action against the Houthis in Yemen. Let us pray that this does not escalate tensions further in the region and that worldwide trading routes can be protected.

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