

PERSECUTION

THE LESSON: 2 CORINTHIANS 4

*To succour, help, and comfort all that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation,
We beseech thee, good Lord.*

So what have we learned about the world? God loves it so much that he sent his Son so that those who believe might be saved (John 3:16). But the world loves darkness rather than the light (John 3:19). In fact, the world hates Jesus, and it hates those who belong to him (John 15:18-19). But we're here because we are called to love as God loves: to be messengers of reconciliation, a blessing, to care for the vulnerable, to work for peace, to pray for those in authority, and to be salt and light.

The New Testament teaches us not to be surprised when the world directs hostility and persecution our way. Instead we are to love our fellow believers with a love that shows the world who we belong to (John 13:35). This means that we must pray with a special love for the persecuted Church, though we know that God is at work in spite of – and even because of – the suffering of those faithful Christians.

St. Paul, who experienced a great deal of persecution firsthand, wrote these words from prison:

“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear” (Philippians 1:12-14).

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In the second epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul and St. Timothy remind us of the amazing ministry we share and God's power to see us through whatever this world may throw at us.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

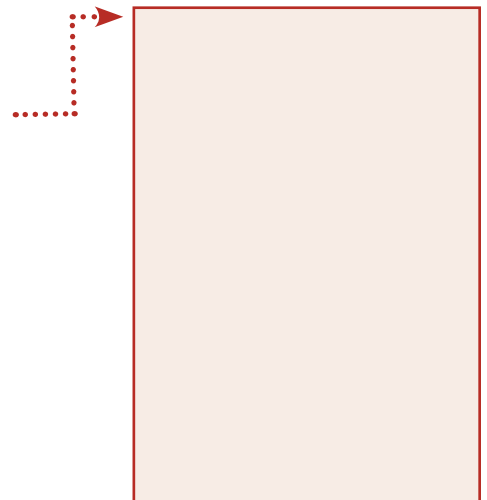
(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE "FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES", WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER))

Each day this week, take time to pray for each of the areas on your group's list and the believers there. Ask God to provide for their every need, giving them hope so that they would be confident in his love and courageous in sharing the good news. Ask him to open the hearts of their persecutors so that they might believe and be changed.

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer.

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: Defend us thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (COLLECT FOR PEACE, BCP PAGE 11)



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2 CORINTHIANS 4: **WE DO NOT LOSE HEART**

¹Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. ²But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practise cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness", has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁷But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

¹³Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke", we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

¹⁶So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.