

PRAY FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Devotional

God Sees The Unseen

“She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: ‘You are the God Who Sees Me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One Who Sees Me.’” Genesis 16:13

This profound moment takes place near a spring in the desert. This name is given through an Egyptian runaway slave who was pregnant with a baby. Her name was Hagar.

Hagar was given to Abram to bear him children. Then she was physically abused by Sarai because she accomplished her purpose and became pregnant. No one saw Hagar’s struggles, and no one heard her voice.

But there in the desert, as she was sitting at the spring, an angel of God comes to her and blesses her with the same blessing God has given to Abram: “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.” God also names her son: “Ishmael—God who hears.” There, in the desert, in her fleeing, God hears her unvoiced sorrows. God sees her unseen miseries. And thus Hagar names God, “El Roi—God who sees me.”

It is a daily reality for the persecuted Christians to have their sorrows, sufferings and needs unseen and unheard. When they choose to follow Jesus, many of them are rejected and cast out by their families, neighbors, and society. As social outcasts, they are vulnerable to violence and abuse. Their reality seems far from God’s promise to His people.

But like God saw and heard Hagar, He sees those who cry out from the desert. God not only saw Hagar’s sufferings, but He also “saw to” take care of her. He sees the sorrows and sufferings of the people who are unseen, and He wants us to see them too. As we seek God, we not only see God who sees our troubles, but also we see His heart for the most unseen and vulnerable and can become His eyes, His hands, and His feet to care for them.

Prayer Points

1. For us to remember that God sees the deepest parts of our hearts.
2. For brothers and sisters who are suffering persecution to see the Lord Who Sees and hears them.

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Surrounded By Our Enemies

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psalm 23:5-6

Have you ever felt like you were surrounded by enemies, with no one on your side?

We may feel that in our families, our workplaces, schools, or our culture. Perhaps that is why David’s psalm has been loved across time and culture for generations. David had many enemies throughout his lifetime. He lived under death threats for decades. His own son turned against him. Until his death, David fought wars and was betrayed by his inner circle.

Yet David confesses that God’s goodness and love had followed him all his life. He witnesses how God not only saved him from his enemies but made him prosper. He saw God heal his wounds and trauma.

When sheep are in the field, insects and parasites go into their eyes and ears, causing infections. In the worst case, the insects and parasites can go into their brains and eventually make them insane or kill them. To prevent this, the shepherd would pour oil over their heads to get rid of the insects and parasites. The oil in Psalm 23:5 is written in this context.

Christians living under persecution face threats from people, societies, and governments. When we are in an environment that opposes following Jesus, it is like insects and parasites trying to blind us and infiltrate our brains. But Jesus is our shepherd. He pours his healing oil to kill the “insects and parasites” that infect our spirits, bodies, souls, minds, and hearts. And he promises that he will make us prosper in the presence of our enemies.

Prayer Points

1. For the Lord to anoint His healing oil upon our heads to cleanse all insects and parasites that infect our hearts and minds.
2. For the Lord’s oil to overflow upon our brothers and sisters enduring persecution, healing their wounds, and giving new strength.

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Living As Chosen Yet Persecuted

“To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.” 1 Peter 1:1-2

1 Peter was written to the diaspora, Christians in the provinces of the Roman Empire who were living like exiles and oppressed for their faith. Peter presents a strategy for how to live as chosen yet persecuted.

“Diaspora” means: 1) any group that has been dispersed outside its traditional homeland, or 2) any religious group living as a minority among people of the prevailing religion. Persecuted Christians may live in their homeland yet are a “diaspora” spiritually and culturally as they live among people of different beliefs.

Peter declares their identity: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” 1 Peter 2:9

And he encourages them – even as they are persecuted – to live holy, knowing that God will judge impartially: “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.” 1 Peter 1:14-15

Peter reveals the power of good deeds in the life of a Christian living under persecution. Their identity as God’s chosen is confirmed, and they draw others to Christ as they abstain from sinful desires, submit to authorities, are always prepared with gentleness and respect to evangelize, and love each other deeply.

Oftentimes Christians living under persecution do not have the freedom to openly preach the gospel. But their holiness and good deeds can speak for Him.

Prayer Points

1. For persecuted Christians to be secure in their identity of being God’s chosen.
2. For the Holy Spirit to fill our persecuted brothers and sisters with wisdom and strength to show Jesus through their good deeds.