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The two women were stripped naked and matched for the fight with a mad heifer. They were badly mutilated but not dead. To complete the deed, a sword was used to cut Perpetua's throat.

After reading the story of Perpetua and Felicitas, we could ask the question 'What are the benefits of identifying with Christ when the consequences are so dire?'

Jesus answered:

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you". (Matthew 5:10-12)

Jesus experienced the hatred of the crowd when they shouted "crucify Him". He taught His disciples in the New Testament that, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you"(John 15:18-20). Christians around the world were again reminded just weeks ago on Palm Sunday that the Christian Church continues to be vulnerable in the 21st century. On April 9, 2017 more than 40 Coptic Christians in Egypt were killed and many were injured during Sunday morning worship in their church. This is not an isolated incident. Scripture records that Christians can expect persecution as

John wrote "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (1 John 3:13).

To face death for Christian beliefs would be cause for thought. Peter denied Jesus three times prior to the crucifixion in fear that he too would be crucified if he identified with his LORD. Matthew records that when Peter realized what he had done, "...he went out and wept bitterly" (26:75).

**It's easy
to stand with
the crowd.
It takes
Courage
to stand alone.**

Think Beyond Easter



THINKING BEYOND EASTER

Easter celebrations are over! The chore of packing away the decorations is completed. Even all that egg salad from the coloured eggs has been eaten. What now? It's onward and upward looking forward to the Victoria Day weekend.

Let's not pack away the Easter message with the decorations. Let's take some time to reflect on the Resurrection of Jesus, let's take some time to praise Him, let's take some time to ask Him to be more present in our lives!

I offer here a simple prayer to help us direct our thoughts and praise.

Jesus,

Thank you for the gift of eternal salvation. God, you have planted me in a safe, war free country. I got to celebrate Your great love for me on Easter morning. I ask You to draw me closer to You; help me to let go of everything I hold on that separates me from You. Purify my heart as I struggle to let you lead me in the good times and help me to understand the bad times.

Thank you for being the example of mercy. Jesus, in the midst of your agony and suffering on the cross, you ministered to and saved a thief. Your love covers every imaginable sin I have committed in the past and, try as I might, I always find myself faltering and ending up in sin. I always need your mercy as I travel my Christian journey. I repent of my sins and ask for your love. Help me love others as deeply as you love me.

Help me to forgive those who have offended me and give me the courage to acknowledge that I have offended others along the way.

Thank you for the peace that comes when I lean totally on you. When difficult times find and overwhelm me, help me focus on You. Keep me calm and quiet my aching soul. Help me find contentment in You alone.

Thank you for the promise of joy and the restoration of me to the Father through the work of the Cross. Show me how to be actively involved in rejoicing together in fellowship with family and friends. Knowing I fall short I continue to try. I never want to forget or take lightly all the good works You have done in my life.

I praise you that you are the gift of HOPE. Nothing can separate me from your love for not even death could do it. I love you, Jesus!

Amen!

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest!" Matthew 21:9



In Preparation for the World Day of Prayer 2018

All God's Creation is Very Good.

God is Good All the Time

It's always easy to see God's good gifts when life is sweet. In the good times it's so easy to see His glorious presence and the beauty of His creation all around us. Sometimes life is just plain hard. It's in these times of fear, hurt, despair, loneliness and helplessness when we are driven to our knees to seek God and beg Him that we may see His intervention in our lives. In the down times, it's difficult to find, but, we must grasp with all our might and hold on to the one simple truth

God is good all the time.

All God's Creation is Very Good

In this life of highs and lows our hearts can be rejoicing and breaking at the same time. We want to be brave like the Apostle Paul, who said:

. . . for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need ([Philippians 4:11-12](#))

Horatio G. Spafford said it this way in his hymn *It Is Well with My Soul*

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,

When sorrows like sea billows roll;

Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,

It is well, it is well, with my soul.

The journey of any Christian leads over high mountains, and through low valleys. The Lord doesn't promise us a life of only joy, or a life without sorrow; but He promises to stand beside us through it all.

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