

# The Prayer Class

**Purpose:** *To encourage greater participation and joy in prayer*

*The Prayer Class meets in God's Throne Room 24/7*

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence Ephesians 3:12

The LORD has done great things for us, and ***we are filled with joy*** Psalm 126:3

Teacher: Abe Funk

Date: November 14, 2024

**Lesson:** *If the World Hates You*

**Welcome to The Prayer Class:**

Jesus gave a blessing to those who are persecuted for their faith in him. *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. We pray for those who are persecuted that they will be strong!

**Bible Reading:** John 15:18-27

"**If the world hates you**, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.' "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

**Key Verse:** *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first 18.*

**Background and Lesson:**

The world does not always hate Christians, but there have been many places through history where Christians are hated, even today. While Canada has been considered a Christian nation, we are very secular, and recently there have been events and reactions that are intolerant and anti-Christian. Persecution could come here, as it has to many nations. Persecution has always followed Christians, and many, between 5-7,000 are killed each year. North Korea and Nigeria kill the most Christians.

Jesus said, ***If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.*** Stephen was the first Christian martyr, a contemporary of the Apostles. Then James was killed. Most of Apostles died as martyrs, and many in every generation since then have given their lives just for believing in Christ. In one way it baffles me that the best person who ever walked this earth, who offers love, forgiveness, peace and

joy, can be so hated? And not only Jesus, but those who believe in him. The following story from The Prayer Bible is an example in my continuing series on persecution, to encourage prayer for persecuted Christians as observed every November.

Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was a very old man when he was ordered to stand before the proconsul. At 86, with his body weak and his life nearly over, it seemed that his options were few, like the choice proconsul gave him: either renounce Christ or die. But there's a freedom in having little to lose. When the proconsul demanded that he renounce his faith in Christ, he answered, "I have served him for 80 years, and he has never done me wrong: How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"

I have wild beasts," said the proconsul.

"Call them," replied Polycarp.

"If you make light of beasts," retorted the governor, "I'll have you destroyed by fire."

Polycarp answered, "The fire you threaten burns for a time and is soon extinguished: There is a fire you know nothing about—the fire of the judgment to come, and of eternal punishment, the fire reserved for the ungodly. But why do you hesitate? Do what you want."

The crowd quickly gathered wood and built a pyre. After Polycarp said a prayer, the men in charge lit the fire, a great flame shot up, and one of the last individuals to have personally known one of the Apostles was gone. Polycarp's predecessor in Smyrna had been John. The year was A.D 155.

**Quote:** *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death Revelation 12:11*

### **Think About This:**

I often wonder how I would respond if faced with Polycarp's choice. Would I stand strong, and how can I prepare? Jesus promised, *...when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you* Matthew 10:19-20. Just live for Jesus faithfully every day!

### **A Prayer for You:**

Consider Polycarp's prayer on the day of his death: *"O Father of thy beloved and blessed Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we come to know thee, the God of angel's and powers and all creation, and of the whole family of the righteous who live in thy presence; I bless thee for counting me worthy of this day and hour, that in the number of the martyrs I may partake of Christ's cup, to the resurrection of eternal life of both soul and body in the imperishability that is the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

### **My Notes and what To Pray for:**

Add your prayer requests here: yourself, family, church family, missionaries, & leaders in government  
Note: All Scriptures are from the NIV Bible unless otherwise indicated

***Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful*** Colossians 4:2

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