

Pressing On

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).

Scripture: Romans 8:18-28

Song: “When We All Get to Heaven”

On a trip to Colorado, I wanted a bird’s-eye view of my childhood home, so my husband, Jeff, and I drove up the highest paved road in North America. It was true that the Mount Evans Scenic Byway was paved, but orange traffic cones marked crumbling sections of tarmac. Jeff navigated hairpin turns and white-knuckled it when passing vehicles were coming toward us. By the time we reached Summit Lake, we were practically hyperventilating! Would the view be worth all this effort?

The apostle Paul reminded believers in Rome that the Christian life would not be a smooth journey. Trials and afflictions would come their way, sometimes for the sake of Christ. But Paul encouraged his readers to keep going because of the promise of what is to come.

With everything we see happening in the world, we might feel overwhelmed and discouraged. To keep us focused and hopeful, God has given His inspired Word to encourage us. And as the hymn writer Eliza Hewitt wrote in today’s song, we can sing, “While we walk the pilgrim pathway, / Clouds will overspread the sky; / But when trav’ling days are over, / Not a shadow, not a sigh.”

Father, thank You for reminding me that there are better days ahead. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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September 2–8. **Rebecca Stuhmiller** helps people take practical steps to grow deeper in their love for Jesus and wider in loving service to others. She and her husband, Jeff, live in Federal Way, Washington.

Tell Him Your Troubles

The righteous person may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all (Psalm 34:19).

Scripture: Psalm 34:11-22

Song: “I Must Tell Jesus”

Helen Roseveare (1925–2016) was a medical student at the University of Cambridge when she received Christ and decided to become a missionary. Upon graduation, she applied with the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC) and set off for the Congo. There she was thrust into leadership, but her strong personality caused friction with other missionaries. After five years of service, she went back to England for further training and to consider her future. Ultimately, she returned to the Congo, which had become antagonistic toward foreigners, adding another layer of difficulty to her service there.

When we face struggles like Helen did, how do we overcome our difficulties? Do we chastise ourselves? Do we gloss over problems, telling ourselves to just count our blessings while pretending everything’s OK? Or are we honest with ourselves and with God, calling out to Him when we’re struggling?

While it’s not healthy for us to dwell on our problems, it’s also not good for us to deny them. When we read Psalms, we’re reminded that it’s OK to be honest with God, to bring our pain to Him and cry, “Unfair!” He knows that life on earth includes suffering. He knows what is happening to us in the places where we are hurting and struggling—and He cares.

Father, thank You for understanding my human nature and allowing me to pour out my struggles to You in an honest way. I trust You to intervene and provide what is needed. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Singing All Together

Long ago, in the days of David and Asaph, there had been directors for the musicians and for the songs of praise and thanksgiving to God (Nehemiah 12:46).

Scripture: Nehemiah 12:27-30, 44-47

Song: “Come, Let Us All Unite to Sing”

Music is an important part of our life as believers. Yet sometimes our differing opinions about what is appropriate for worship can divide us. I once heard a leader point out that a song I had learned in my early days of following Jesus was not God-centered but man-centered. In another church, I was disappointed when an 800-year-old classic was eliminated from the song list because it was deemed outdated. Regardless of such things, I will keep singing with God’s people!

When the Israelites gathered to celebrate the restoration of the wall of Jerusalem, worship leaders came to direct the people in song. Some tunes were “oldies but goodies,” composed by King David and Asaph. Did everyone remember these songs? Were there new songs as well? In any case, everyone joined in singing with one voice.

When the apostle Paul closed his letter to the Romans, he prayed for believers to glorify God in united worship, writing, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6).

Father, bless the song leaders who are preparing for the upcoming worship service. Help them bring glory to Your name as they point me and other worshipers to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Good Examples

[God said to Solomon,] “As for you, if you walk before me faithfully as David your father did, and do all I command, and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne” (2 Chronicles 7:17-18).

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:12-22

Song: “How Beautiful”

A well-known Christian teacher came to our city to speak at a conference, and I was assigned to be her aide. Turns out, she arrived with a traveling companion, so all I did was transport her to the airport. At the conference, her message was powerful and bold. There was no hesitancy or apology when she shared God’s Word. On the way to the airport, I took advantage of the opportunity to pepper her with questions. I wanted to know all I could about her life because I wanted to be like her.

While no human is perfect—and King David’s life wasn’t without mistakes—God considered him to be a man worth emulating. So the Lord encouraged Solomon, David’s son, to be like his dad. God promised that if Solomon followed Him fully and obeyed Him with a whole heart like David had, Solomon’s descendants would sit on the throne forever.

Who are your heroes of faith? And how are they inspiring you to follow Christ? Maybe it would be a good time to reread a biography or to contact a former mentor. Or perhaps you might consider contacting someone else who is having a positive spiritual influence on your life.

Father, thank You for giving me examples who encourage my faith and inspire me to grow, even while I know You are my ultimate guide. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Prayer 101

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1).

Scripture: Luke 11:1-13

Song: “The Lord’s Prayer”

While on vacation in the Yorkshire Dales, England, my husband and I attended a church service in the nearby market town of Carnforth. That Sunday, Pastor Cristi spoke about prayer. He said that although some people find it easy to pray, no one is born knowing how to do it, and no one has an exclusive gift for praying. Rather, prayer needs to be learned. “Prayer is hard,” he said. “Prayer is a battle. Prayer is a challenge for almost every normal Christian, so there’s no better place to go than to Jesus and see what He teaches.”

The disciples watched Jesus and walked with Him, and when they saw how He spoke to His Father in Heaven, they wanted to learn how to do it too. So they humbly asked Him for instruction, and Jesus honored their request by giving them a framework to follow so they could learn how to pray effectively.

We felt encouraged when Pastor Cristi reminded us at the end of that church service, “Prayer is a journey. Prayer is a learning process, and we’re [all] at different stages. But one thing that [will] fuel your prayer life is reading the Scriptures. And the more you read, the more you’ll have confidence to come before Him.”

Father, thank You for showing me in Your Word that my prayer life can begin growing simply by calling on You as my Heavenly Father. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Introducing God

Then Solomon stood . . . in front of the whole assembly of Israel . . . and said: “LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way (1 Kings 8:22-23).

Scripture: 1 Kings 8:22-24, 27-30, 37-43

Song: “Your Great Name”

I turned beet red when I heard the emcee introduce me. I had sent a short bio to make sure the audience knew who I was, but after she'd read what I'd written, the speaker began to elaborate. I was the field leader for an organization, and she wanted to honor me. But there were inaccuracies that made me seem more important than I was. The high expectations created by this made me nervous. I didn't want to embarrass her, so I didn't make any corrections, leaving the audience under a mistaken impression about me.

When King Solomon went before the people, he knew the God of Israel and acknowledged Him publicly, accurately declaring the truth about His character. God is the true God, there is no one like Him, and He is the One who can be trusted to keep His promises.

There's no better way for us to know God than to devote time and attention to reading His Word to become rightly acquainted with Him. Then when we meet others and want to introduce our Savior to them, we can accurately share who He is and represent Him well.

Father, help me introduce You accurately through what You have revealed in Scripture. In Jesus' name, amen.

Cleaning Out Our Hearts

[Solomon prayed,] “When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin . . . forgive your people . . . whom you brought out of Egypt” (1 Kings 8:46, 50-51).

Scripture: 1 Kings 8:44-53

Song: “Forgiveness”

The fall air was crisp, but it was warm enough for me to sit on the front porch and read my Bible. After praying, I felt refreshed and ready to tackle the worst job on my to-do list: cleaning out the shower drain. Holding my breath and grimacing, I reached in and dug out a glob of soap-scum residue. Yuck! At that moment, I realized that although I had just spent time in fellowship with the Lord, I had a similarly disgusting glob in my heart: bitterness toward a fellow believer.

Despite my deep commitment to God, I will always have the propensity to sin. Solomon knew the same thing about the Israelites, so the young king prayed for them in advance.

The Scriptures tell us that God “knows how we are formed” (Psalm 103:14), and Jesus, our high priest, is able “to empathize with our weaknesses” (Hebrews 4:15). The example of Solomon’s prayer reminds us that God is willing to forgive us when we ask Him to. As His children, we can pray the words of Psalm 139 daily: “Search me, God, and know my heart. . . . See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (vv. 23-24).

Father, thank You for Your mercy. Help me to recognize and forsake sin before it takes root in my heart. In Jesus’ name, amen.