

Keep Praising Him

Why, my soul, are you downcast? . . . Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God (Psalm 42:11).

Scripture: Psalm 42

Song: “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

The doctor gave me her diagnosis: “You have bronchitis. Drink fluids, get plenty of rest, and you should be better by the end of next week.” Although I thanked her for seeing me, I wasn’t happy about being sick *again*. There was too much to do before my upcoming vacation. Moments later I felt guilty about my internal complaining. *I’m sorry for my attitude, Lord, I prayed. Right now I choose to truly thank You for the time I have to rest and heal. I will praise You during this down time.*

In today’s passage, the psalm writer’s grief reveals that he has been struggling with his circumstances and has a heavy heart. Yet, he keeps turning his heart and mind toward God and His goodness until, ultimately, he declares, “I will yet praise Him.”

God has promised that He is with us and will never abandon us (Hebrews 13:5). Even when we’re struggling and not understanding God’s purpose and plan, we can find reasons to give thanks in our circumstances, whatever they may be (1 Thessalonians 5:18). As we wait on Him, let’s keep turning our hearts to praise Him.

Father, help me to trust You in every situation and to look for reasons to give You thanks today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

June 17–23. **Kim Kress** lives in Oregon and has two grown children. She has experience as a group leader in a prayer ministry for moms.

Proclaim with Joy

This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (1 John 5:11).

Scripture: 1 John 5:1-13

Song: “Joy Unspeakable”

At age 14, a boy named Kaboo (1873–1893) experienced a miraculous escape from cruel treatment at the hands of rival tribespeople. Later he became curious about prayer and attended a church where he heard the gospel, received the gift of salvation, and vowed to follow Christ. After his conversion, Kaboo changed his name to Samuel Morris, and at about age 18, he boarded a ship to North America to pursue an education. While on the voyage, the sailors treated him badly. However, he persevered in demonstrating God’s love to them, and many became Christians as a result.

Today’s passage reminds us that we have a testimony to share with the world. It’s our privilege and responsibility to profess our faith boldly, like Samuel Kaboo Morris did, whenever we have the opportunity. In Romans 10:14-15, the apostle Paul reminds us that people won’t hear the gospel message unless someone tells them. Samuel Morris was so full of his love for the Lord that he made it his life’s mission to tell others about Jesus and the way to be saved.

Daily life brings many distractions. Our thoughts need to be constantly refocused on Christ and His salvation, never forgetting that He has done great things for us (Psalm 126:3). Then with confidence we will be able to spread the greatest story ever told.

Father, thank You for saving me. Help me to share Your love today, even with those who may mistreat me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Prayer According to God's Will

If we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him (1 John 5:15).

Scripture: 1 John 5:14-21

Song: “Sweet Hour of Prayer”

The late Jim Elliot (1927–1956) prayed that the unreached Huaorani people of Ecuador would hear and receive the gospel message. Believing that God heard his prayers, Elliot boarded a plane and with four other missionaries headed for Ecuador's Amazonian region. After preparations were made, the men made contact with the Huaorani. Based on what seemed like promising initial interactions, they set up a base camp not far away. Sadly, however, a group of about 10 Huaorani warriors arrived with spears, attacking and killing the missionaries. Their mission seemed to have failed. However, two years later, Elliot's wife, Elisabeth, flew to the area, learned the language, and was invited to live among the tribe. As a result, many Huaorani came to faith in Christ.

The Lord promises to grant our petitions, but our prayers must be in line with His will (1 John 5:14). As we become increasingly familiar with God's Word, we grow in our understanding of how to pray according to His will, and we have confidence that our prayers of faith will be heard and answered in God's way and timing.

We don't always understand the whys or wherefores of our unanswered prayers, but we can be confident that God hears us and responds from within His wisdom and great love for us as His children.

Father, thank You that, in Your faithful wisdom, You hear and answer my prayers according to Your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

Our Guide

He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake (Psalm 23:3).

Scripture: Psalm 23

Song: "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"

While I was traveling in a foreign city, unwelcomed nerves surfaced when I found myself driving at night. I made a right turn and heard loud music coming from somewhere nearby. I rolled down my window a crack and in desperation yelled: "Please help me! I need directions!" Out of the shadows, a figure approached. I explained, "I'm lost. I need to get to the Hampton Inn." A baritone voice responded, "Follow me." The stranger jumped into a truck. After leading me up and down hills, past street signs, and through streetlights, the man made a U-turn in the middle of a two-lane highway, pointed to my hotel, and drove off.

When we find ourselves in precarious situations, we can remember that God not only guided the Israelites during the day but also at night (Exodus 13:21-22). Just as the Lord faithfully guided His people through the wilderness and cared for their needs, so He will faithfully guide and provide for us. He will strengthen our frame and set us on the right path.

All of us who have put our trust in Christ for salvation are truly blessed. We have nothing to fear because He is with us. That's why we can follow Him with confidence, day and night.

Father, thank You for Your abiding presence with me. Help me to remember that You are here, ready to lead and guide me today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Declare God's Deeds

Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world (Isaiah 12:5).

Scripture: Isaiah 12

Song: "Jesus Saves"

The Christian radio station's announcer told listeners about Vern, an army veteran who was a believer. Vern was terminally ill with cancer and living out his last days in a Hospice facility. Two listeners responded by calling the station to find out if they could visit Vern. These two kind men carried notes of encouragement to Vern that they had gathered from other believers. During their visit the three men shared with one another how God had saved, blessed, and provided for each of them. Their time together ended with prayer and praises.

Even though Vern was fighting a battle with cancer, he sang and testified to commemorate God's great work in his life. The Scriptures tell us about Miriam, who led dancing and singing after God defeated Pharaoh and his army (Exodus 15:19-21). The New Testament tells about Paul and Silas who, after being beaten and imprisoned, sang hymns to God from within their cell (Acts 16:22-25). And as believers in Christ, we too are called to give thanks to God in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

In whatever situation we find ourselves today, may our thoughts and words be pleasing in God's sight (Psalm 19:14). And when our days here are completed, let it be said of us that we stood strong in the Lord and spoke boldly for Christ. May we never stop proclaiming the life-changing message of His redemptive love!

Father, I want to spend my days making Your greatness and goodness known! In Jesus' name, amen.

Keep Growing!

Let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity (Hebrews 6:1).

Scripture: Hebrews 6:1-8

Song: “O Jesus, I Have Promised”

“Please, measure me. I want to see how tall I am!” a 5-year-old may beg. Then, as a teen, he or she might ask, “Could I have the car tonight?” Then, if that child graduates from high school, parents might hear the words, “I got the scholarship! I’m headed for college!” Growing up and moving toward maturity is an ongoing process.

Just as a child moves from infant to toddler and eventually from teen to adult, so we as Christians are to grow step-by-step toward spiritual maturity. Along our way, it’s good to keep in mind that this is a lifelong process of transformation. And, with the Holy Spirit’s help, the process involves abandoning our selfish priorities as we adopt spiritually nurturing habits, such as Bible study, prayer, fellowship, service, and stewardship. In these ways, we will become increasingly like our Savior.

While even the apostle Paul realized he had not yet attained to the goal of all that God had called Him to in Christ, he kept pressing on to reach that goal (Philippians 3:12-14). Only when we see Christ in Heaven and are face-to-face with Him will we finally be made complete in Him. But until that time, we are called to move toward maturity, making the most of the time the Lord gives us to live worthy of our calling in Christ (Ephesians 4:1).

Father, today I want to take steps that will lead to spiritual maturity. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Run with Perseverance

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized (Hebrews 6:11).

Scripture: Hebrews 6:9-20

Song: “Give of Your Best to the Master”

I parked my car at the Special Olympics venue in Washington State and headed for the grandstands. After finding a seat, my attention was on the runners in the 3,000-meter race. They put their toes behind the starting line, and the starter yelled, “On your mark!” The gun sounded, and the athletes took off. One runner, while rounding a corner with the others, fell, got back up, and kept running. Several minutes later, that same athlete crossed the finish line, earning the first-place ribbon!

On our journey through life, sometimes we will fall like that long-distance runner did. When this happens, we can remember that our suffering and struggles produce in us the important quality of perseverance (Romans 5:3). As we keep strengthening our hearts through prayer, reading God’s Word, and seeking His kingdom first in all things, we will be able to get up from our falls and carry on. In the Lord’s strength, we can persevere, running in such a way as to win the prize, the reward God has reserved for us in Heaven (1 Corinthians 9:24).

Let’s keep striving with courage and hope to finish our race. As we keep our eyes, mind, and strength focused on our Lord, we will cross the finish line in victory one day.

Father, thank You for encouraging and helping me to remain focused on running this race well. In Jesus’ name, amen.