

Suffering Forges Faithfulness

Son though he was, [Jesus] learned obedience from what he suffered (Hebrews 5:8).

Scripture: Hebrews 5

Song: “Blessed Be Your Name”

Although no stranger to suffering, Helen Keller did not begrudge her infirmities. They didn't hold her back but gave her strength and perseverance. She went on to become the first deaf and blind person to earn a college degree. A quote attributed to her provides a glimpse into her perspective: “Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

When Jesus suffered on our behalf, He didn't begrudge the painful trial. His response to suffering proved His love for His Father, demonstrating that He was a faithful Son. He willingly went to the cross to fulfill His Father's plan of salvation.

When we find ourselves in the midst of suffering—no matter how long- or short-lived—it's important to remember that God has not abandoned us, that He never stops loving us. Our suffering is not random and meaningless, and our trust in the Lord is not in vain. God is with us in our trials, and He is able to form in us a tender heart of compassion and an obedient trust to endure.

Father, thank You for reminding me that You are with me in my suffering and that, in love, You are forging a faithful heart in me. In Jesus' name, amen.

March 10–16. **Harriet E. Michael** of Louisville, Kentucky, is a wife, mother, and grandmother. She enjoys substitute teaching and working in her garden.

Set Apart to Serve God

Moses said to the assembly, “This is what the LORD has commanded to be done.” Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water. He put the tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him (Leviticus 8:5–7).

Scripture: Leviticus 8:1–13

Song: “Draw Me Nearer”

As a child, I was baptized in Africa, where my parents worked as missionaries. As an adult, I look back on that experience as a privilege, being baptized by and with Nigerian believers. I love that part of my personal story. However, as special as my baptism experience is to me, it is the fact of my belonging to Christ and being set apart to Him that is truly significant.

Today’s passage is about a time when Moses washed and clothed Aaron and his sons as a symbol of their being set apart to serve God in His tabernacle and to minister on behalf of the people. What an honor!

Today, when any of us receives God’s gift of salvation by grace through faith, we are also set apart by God for His purposes. Our washing is spiritual—a cleansing from our sin. As a result, God’s grace is at work in our lives, and we are equipped for meaningful service in His kingdom. What an honor it is to belong to Him!

Father, thank You for cleansing me from my sin, clothing me in Christ’s righteousness, and setting me apart to serve You. May I be mindful—today and always—that I am Yours. In Jesus’ name, amen.

His Blood Given for Us

[Moses] then presented the bull for the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head (Leviticus 8:14).

Scripture: Leviticus 8:14–23

Song: “The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power”

Some years ago, at a missionary reunion, I heard about a young Nigerian boy who had been asked to donate blood to his sister who was ill. This child walked about a mile to get to the hospital to donate his blood. After the procedure, he lay on the bed for a long time. Finally, someone asked him if he was OK, to which he responded, “When will I die?” Come to find out, he had arrived with the impression that the procedure would take all his blood for his sister’s sake.

Today’s Scripture mentions some of the many sacrifices we read about in the Old Testament. These were required by God and accepted by Him as atonement. But in the New Testament, we read of the perfect and permanent, one-time sacrifice that did away with the need for all other sacrifices. That perfect sacrifice, of course, is Jesus, whose atoning death, burial, and resurrection has provided the gift of salvation for all who will receive it.

The Nigerian boy had the ability to help his sister heal through his gift of donated blood. It did not require his life, but he was willing to give it. Jesus’ sacrifice *did* require His life. And Jesus’ sacrifice offers eternal life for God’s adopted children (Gal. 4:6–7)!

Father, thank You for sending Your Son to save me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Taste of Heaven

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! . . . It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion (Psalm 133:1, 3).

Scripture: Psalm 133

Song: "All Creatures of Our God and King"

When my family gets together, we seem to have nearly every possible color of eyes, hair, and skin tone among us. Though my husband and I are white, three of our five grandchildren have African-American, Asian, and Hispanic ancestry. Two of our grandchildren have blond hair and blue eyes, and if you throw in my daughter's red hair—and the touches of gray from my husband and me—we have a lot of different appearances included in our family!

Today's Scripture expresses just how beautiful it is when believers—regardless of distinctions such as race, nationality, language, or socioeconomic status—live in the peace of unity. An inspiring picture of this can be seen in Revelation 7:9, where John looks around in his vision and sees a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before God's throne and worshipping Him together.

On this side of eternity, we sometimes have trouble getting along with one another. It's something we work on all our lives. How pleasant it is when we *do* get along. It's a little taste of Heaven.

Father, I need Your wisdom and humility to pursue the kind of unity that comes through grace and truth. As others witness the blessing of peaceful fellowship among Your people, may they be drawn to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

A Better Priest

If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood . . . why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? (Hebrews 7:11).

Scripture: Hebrews 7:1–14

Song: “Before the Throne of God Above”

I’ve heard it said that the book of Hebrews is the “better-than” book. It tells of many things that are better than others. For instance, it speaks of a better covenant enacted on better promises (8:6); a greater, more perfect tabernacle (9:11); better and lasting possessions (10:34); and a better kingdom—one that cannot be shaken (12:28).

Today’s passage tells of a better priest. Many of the early Christians to whom the book was written were Jews. For some, an obstacle to their understanding of Jesus as their high priest was that Jesus was not from the traditional Levitical priestly line. So, the writer of Hebrews reminds them of Melchizedek—mentioned in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110—who was a priest to God before the Levitical line was established. The writer goes on to make the point that Jesus was like Melchizedek in that sense, but even better.

The point is that we have a great high priest—better than any from the Levitical line—one who forever intercedes for us before God’s throne. How blessed we are to have such an intercessor and Savior!

Father, thank You for giving Your Son, whose name is above every other name. I look forward to the day when I will stand before You, made perfect by all He has provided as my high priest. In Jesus’ name, amen.

A Perfect Priest

The law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever (Hebrews 7:28).

Scripture: Hebrews 7:15–28

Song: “Blessed Assurance”

In ancient Rome, when generals returned from major military victories, a triumphal procession would ensue, beginning early in the morning and lasting a full day, or even two days. In his horse-drawn, gold- and ivory-adorned chariot, the general would parade through the streets of Rome with his troops, prisoners, and spoil amid the cheers and praise of the people, who would esteem the general, sometimes as a god. As part of this march through the city, a slave might be assigned to follow behind the general, the whole time whispering to him, “Remember you are mortal.”

Our Scripture today tells us about Jesus, our great high priest who, though He was fully man, was so much more: He was, in fact, also fully God. This passage in Hebrews draws a contrast between the Levitical priests and Jesus. Those earlier servants of God from the priestly line were mere men—humans full of flaws and failings. But Jesus is not a priest from Aaron’s line; His priesthood is based in His eternal existence with God.

Jesus is the guarantor of a better covenant, a priest who is holy, blameless, and pure—a perfect priest. His intercession is permanent, and He can save us completely!

Father, Your Son is the perfect high priest, whose intercession has saved me. Thank You for being a perfect God with a perfect, unshakable plan. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Our Life's Impact

[God told Moses,] “Make atonement for the altar and consecrate it. Then the altar will be most holy, and whatever touches it will be holy” (Exodus 29:37).

Scripture: Exodus 29:1–9, 35–37

Song: “I Would Be True”

In the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, George Baily sees what things would have been like if he had never been born. Through this revelation, he is surprised and humbled to realize the important difference his actions, kindnesses, and sacrifices have made in the experience of so many others. He had been a consistent source of encouragement, support, and even rescue to those in his sphere of influence.

In the Old Testament days, only priests could approach God's holy presence in the temple, but on this side of Christ's atoning sacrifice, all believers can approach His throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). Christ has bridged the gap between holy God and sinful humanity by taking our sins on himself at the cross and providing His own righteousness to us.

In today's key verse we see that those who touched the altar of God became holy. Like that image, we have been made holy through the altar of Christ's sacrifice. How are we carrying the weighty responsibility of being God's holy people? Are others better off for having been around us? Are we showing the world Jesus' truth and love by how we live, what we say, and what we do?

Father, it's my desire to follow You faithfully, reflecting Your goodness to those around me. Use my life to demonstrate Your grace and truth. In Jesus' name, amen.