Praying God’s Promises in Times of Trouble

PLUS: Celebrating Thirdmill’s Partnerships with Museum of the Bible and P&R Publishing
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

RISK & Refuge

Praying God’s Promises in Times of Trouble

Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.

AS FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, we welcome opposition. In theory. But what happens when that opposition impacts our lives and the lives of our children, grandchildren, friends, neighbors, and people we care about personally? We have to admit that opposition in theory is much different than opposition experientially.

In our world right now, many Christians are experiencing opposition and suffering. We think of our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and Russia—including Thirdmill staff—living in war zones and under political oppression. Christians in China and India are coping with escalating suspicion, antagonism, and threats to their lives and livelihoods.

We don’t have to look far to uncover suffering in our own lives and among people we love dearly. We all carry heavy burdens of fear, concern, loss, or grief.

In times such as these, when day-to-day life feels risky and uncertain, we long for refuge. Psalm 121 offers us hope: “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (vv. 1-2).

Many of us read this psalm and imagine a picturesque scene, complete with rolling green hills and a cloudless blue sky. A scene so glorious that it reminds us of God and his splendor. For the people of ancient Israel, however, this was not the scene they encountered.

Psalm 121 is a “psalm of ascents,” a psalm that was sung on a pilgrimage where the hills were not a beautiful, happy place. They were a life- and livelihood-threatening place, where thieves lay in wait to ambush God-fearing pilgrims. The thieves knew they could take advantage of the travelers, who carried enough money to buy sacrificial animals once they arrived in Jerusalem.

Likely, this psalm was written by a worshiper who’d gone to a Levite priest before his pilgrimage; he’d confessed his fear and affirmed his faith in God as his helper. The remainder of the song is the priest’s prophetic affirmation to the traveler: God is with you.

It’s easy to see why this psalm would be such an encouragement, not only to that first pilgrim who received the blessing centuries ago, but to us today. It’s not a promise that we’ll never face dangers or challenges, because we all do. Jesus taught us that in this world we will have trouble (John 16:33).

The promise is that no matter what we go through, no matter what risk or harm we may face, the Lord has us in his hands. He doesn’t sleep. He will be with us. And we will be okay in the end.

Consider these Thirdmill partners and students—modern-day pilgrims taking refuge in the promises of God:

• Siberian prisoners using Thirdmill materials to study God’s Word.
• Five pastors from the Darfur region of Sudan, one of the darkest places for the Christian faith, who are receiving biblical training to raise up other leaders in this region.
• A chaplain with the U.S. Federal Prison System providing Thirdmill materials in his correctional facility.
• Thirdmill team members in Ukraine and Russia who pray with and for one another in our daily prayer time over Zoom.

And you—what threats do you see when you lift your eyes to the hills? In what areas does your life feel troubled?

The priestly word given thousands of years ago to someone else can be taken up by you as you sojourn, being faithful to travel the paths God has laid out for you. You can find strength for your journey and the courage to move ahead.

There is no need to fear because our God doesn’t slumber. He doesn’t sleep. He watches, he protects, he cares for us, and with him we can make it through the hills, to the house of the Lord.

DR. RICHARD L. PRATT, JR. is the President & Co-founder of Thirdmill. Learn more about Dr. Pratt online at: thirdmill.org/mission/prattBio.asp.
Night at the MUSEUM

Thirdmill Celebrates Partnership with Museum of the Bible on New Video Series

“THE BIBLE IS A MAGNIFICENT BOOK,” said Thirdmill President Dr. Richard Pratt, addressing his audience of partners, patrons, and friends. “It’s the Word of God given to us for all ages and all places and all people.”

Poised at a lectern in the Dupont Circle Hotel in Washington, D.C., Dr. Pratt stood just a short distance away from the renowned Museum of the Bible, home of rare biblical artifacts spanning 4,000 years of history. His talk—part of a two-day event including access to the museum, its leadership, and its treasures—focused on the budding collaboration between Museum of the Bible and Thirdmill. Together, we are producing a new video series:

**Ten Bibles That Changed the World.**

CEO of Museum of the Bible, Harry Hargrave, served as a keynote speaker for the event alongside Dr. Pratt, author Dr. Os Guinness, and Chairman of the Board for the museum, Steve Green. In Mr. Hargrave's words, "Museum of the Bible and Thirdmill share a vision to engage all people with the transformative power of the Bible. The Ten Bibles That Changed the World series will enable people all over the world to learn more about the artifacts housed in the museum and how the history of these Bibles changed the history of humankind."

The series, now in development, will consist of ten 30-minute lessons, one for each of the 10 most influential biblical artifacts to date. The lessons will explore the history of each biblical text as well as its impact on the world as we know it.

According to Dr. Jeffrey Kloha, Chief Curatorial Officer of Museum of the Bible, one of the most important aspects of the series is to investigate how each particular Bible shaped a community. “You have to ask: Why did they format it in the way that they did? … How was it used for guidance in their everyday lives?” he said. "They’re not just museum quality objects, as impressive as they are. They were produced so that God’s people could make a difference in the world.”

He continued: “That’s part of the story we want to tell through this course: how these objects changed these communities and ultimately the world. And especially, then, how the Bible still shapes and changes communities today.”

The Ten Bibles series is intended to serve as a resource for Christians all over the world, whether they’re already connected to Thirdmill training programs or simply curious about the Bible and its history. It is also intended to expand awareness of the museum and the Bible itself.

“I see the museum making people more aware of the Bible,” said Dr. Pratt. “It is amazing to realize how influential the Bible has been in our American culture, but ours is just one of many.”

With its emphasis on education, the museum makes a natural partner for Thirdmill.

“We are so excited to partner with Museum of the Bible to enrich our teaching with biblical artifacts and introduce the museum to schools, churches, and training institutions in our global network,” Dr. Pratt said. “Thirdmill’s mission is simple but ambitious: Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.”
In 1997, in response to the overwhelming scarcity of theological education around the world, Thirdmill began creating and distributing a multimedia seminary curriculum in multiple languages and offering it to everyone who needed it, wherever they lived, for free.

Today, Thirdmill is used to train Christian leaders on every continent via internet, microSD cards, flash drives, broadcasts, audio and print. Visit thirdmill.org to see how Thirdmill is preparing Christian leaders to lead a transformation of the world into God’s Kingdom by providing Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

Thirdmill believes every Christian deserves a well-trained pastor.

IN MAY, P&R PUBLISHING released Christian Essentials, a three-book series based on Thirdmill’s world-class curriculum. These three volumes—The Attributes and Work of God, The Life and Work of Jesus, and The Nature and Work of the Holy Spirit—represent the first time that Thirdmill’s course materials have been made available in book format.

Thirdmill’s Vice President of Operations & Finance, Ra McLaughlin, a contributing author for the series, conveyed his enthusiasm for the project. “We were able to take our materials, which have traditionally existed only in video, and adapt them to a new format—books! ... This gives us the opportunity to add features that can’t exist in video.”

The books are intended to make master’s-level theology clear, personal, and accessible to a broad spectrum of readers. The best part? Every purchase supports the training of pastors around the world!


Event Spotlight: The Larger Story

NIGHT OF MUSIC: Thirdmill Vice President of Advancement & Generosity Jamison Griffin (left) and his wife, Brennan, welcome musician Drew Holcomb at a Thirdmill gathering in Memphis, TN.

IN A SPECIAL TIME OF CELEBRATION, Thirdmill staff and supporters gathered in the Grand Hall of the Central Station Hotel in Memphis, TN, for “The Larger Story” event in April. The evening featured a concert by Drew Holcomb and an opportunity to share some of the amazing stories God is writing through Thirdmill.

A Snapshot of Thirdmill’s Impact & Global Reach

BY THE NUMBERS

1.64 Million reported students trained through Thirdmill materials

500,000+ new reported students in the last 18 months

246 organizational partners who use Thirdmill materials in their ministry

171 nations currently served by the Thirdmill Global Network

16,663 flash drives distributed containing seminary-level education

25 years that Thirdmill has been working to equip the global church
“Both Ukrainian and Russian churches … are hungry for God’s Word.”

THIRDMILL PARTNER, UKRAINE

“We [Thirdmill] paid a man to do some work for us, in a particular language. Today, he continues to work with Thirdmill as a translator, but now as a volunteer. In a routine conversation, he was asked if he had any prayer requests. ‘Sure,’ he said. ‘We are trying to build a prayer hall for our church. Please pray for that.’ He added, ‘By the way, you can thank the team… Some of the money for the building came from the translation work I did for Thirdmill four years ago.’


“Do you see the Spirit at work? This translator worked faithfully to translate biblical education materials for Thirdmill. We paid him what was rightfully his. The Spirit entered in and (like Barnabas) put it in his heart to donate the money to the church. Now his church is building a prayer hall with it! God will receive praise through worship and prayer as a direct result of this translator’s sacrificial obedience!”

STEVE PRIEB, THIRDMILL SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DONOR RELATIONS

“Because of the war, more than 20 people were hiding in the house of one Christian who lives near Kiev. There were both believers and non-believers among them. Due to the fact that they were all together all the time, unbelieving people began to repent, and in this house several people were baptized in water. Some people left for Poland; now 13 people are hiding in their house.

“His pastor and my friend asked me to meet [this Christian man] on Zoom. We sent him the Thirdmill Institute lessons, then trained him on being a Thirdmill Institute trainer. All 13 people will start learning next week. I advised him to register on our Institute website so he can later help other trainers to use our site and Thirdmill materials for free.”

SERGEY IGNASHIN, THIRDMILL REGIONAL DIRECTOR, EURASIA

“Our ministry [to Farsi-speakers] never had a lot of resources for broadcasting and teaching other people, so Thirdmill resources are a great benefit. They speed up our teaching and preaching. For example, we have a radio broadcasting app and people receive this teaching. If we had planned to produce all of these materials, it would take a lot of time. Thirdmill blessed us and gave us permission to use their audio material. So, in different ways—personally, in our ministries, and for the purpose of outreach to Farsi-speakers—Thirdmill resources have blessed all of us.”

HAMID HATAMI, PRESIDENT & CEO, MEHR REFORMED MINISTRIES
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Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

INSIDE THIS NEWSLETTER:

Learn about Thirdmill’s new partnership with Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., to produce this special video series!

Access the trailer here:
youtube.com/thirdmillvideos