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Release Women Email - December 2020

Hello Friend

Holding on to God's promises

As we near the end of 2020, it's good to take a few moments to reflect on this extraordinary year and to look ahead to 2021.

'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.' Romans 8:28

This verse, and the promise within it, was central to some discipleship training received by Eritrean Christians at the beginning of this year in Ethiopia. We shared the stories of two of our sisters who attended the training: Aki's story was in March's Release Women email and Mebrat's in the spring edition of *Embrace*. Many, if not all, of the Eritreans attending that training had already experienced persecution for following Christ and the training was to enable them not just to survive as persecuted Christians, but to thrive: to be strengthened in faith and equipped for ministry. But the promise of Romans 8:28 is not just for persecuted Christians, it is a promise for all of us and one which we have needed to hold on to in 2020 especially.

This year has brought many changes in our lives and although some may be positive, there are many that have been challenging. Even though our experiences this year have not been of persecution, maybe we can learn something from our persecuted brothers and sisters about the difficulties we have faced, to help us serve our persecuted family even more.

Perhaps our experience of 'lockdown' and the limits placed on our freedom of movement have helped us to appreciate the freedom we usually enjoy even more! Maybe it will enable us to pray more effectively for prisoners of faith, such as Pastor Wang Yi of Early Rain Covenant Church in China, and his wife Jiang Rong who, although 'free', is under constant surveillance.

Perhaps our experience of not being able to go to church in person will help us to identify with our sisters in countries where there is not the freedom to worship publicly, such as North Korea. Maybe it will enable us to pray more meaningfully for sisters who have to worship in secret and can never attend a church building.

Perhaps our experience of having our hours of work reduced or even of losing our jobs will help us to understand better the daily struggles of some of our sisters in the Strength to Stand groups in Pakistan and Egypt, where they face poverty due to the discrimination they experience as Christians. Maybe it will enable us to pray with understanding for all of those who are oppressed because they are Christians.

Thank you so much for continuing to pray for your sisters and brothers around the world who suffer for Christ's sake. Thank you for your unfailing generosity and giving in so many sacrificial ways. Thank you for using your amazing creative gifts online to raise the voice of your persecuted sisters with your family, friends and church communities!

If we believe the promise of Romans 8:28 when the sun is shining and all is well in the world, we need to believe it when life is challenging, whatever the cause of the challenges. As we go into 2021, let us hold on to God's promises and keep praying and raising the voice of our persecuted family, whatever our own circumstances!

Have a very happy Christmas and a peaceful and healthy new year,

From all the Release Women team

Please CLICK on the red button if you prayed.

I prayed!

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