

Thankful for Faith and Heaven

Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence (Psalm 140:13, *KJV*).

Scripture: Psalm 140

Song: “When We All Get to Heaven”

Fifty-five-year-old Vera battled the pain of severe arthritis every waking moment. She could not stand or walk without help from her 80-year-old mother. My wife and I were occasionally guests for a meal with Vera and her mother. It was painful for Vera to clutch a fork with her gnarled, painful fingers and then to raise each morsel of food to her mouth.

But Vera never complained. Quite the opposite: she often thanked the Lord for the arthritis, explaining that the affliction kept her home and fueled her prayer life and longing for Heaven. Every day Vera searched the newspaper for stories of people who needed her prayers. Then she would pray for each of them.

“Heaven is going to be a wonderful place,” Vera would say. “I am so glad I will be there. I will see Jesus, and I won’t have arthritis any longer.”

Today Vera is no longer on this earth, but I am certain that she’s in Heaven, dwelling pain-free in the Lord’s presence.

Father, thank You for this reminder to be thankful in every trial. May my anticipation of Heaven grow brighter every day. In Jesus’ name, amen.

January 24–30. **Jim Dyet** is a retired minister and editor who lives in Colorado Springs.

Good Reasons to Be Joyful

Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house (Deuteronomy 26:11, *KJV*).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Song: “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

If your cup of joy is like mine, it leaks occasionally. But all is not lost; we can replenish our cups of joy if we read Paul’s letter to the Philippians. It spilled over with joy in spite of his dire circumstances. Paul was under house arrest in Rome. He had no health insurance, regular income, or 401(k) account. He *did* have stocks and bonds, but they were not financial; they were cuffs clamped on his wrists and ankles! However, he had joy, and he exhorted his Philippian friends to keep on rejoicing in the Lord (Philippians 4:4).

Scripture gives us spiritual truths that plug the leaks in our cups of joy and also replenish our joy. Here are a few: We learn that God will finish the good work He began in us (Philippians 1:6). We also learn that Christ is being preached (v. 18), and someday every knee will bow to Him (2:10). We discover that someday Jesus will return and give each of us a body like His glorified body (3:20-21). In addition, we learn that prayer defeats worry (4:6-7), that the Lord enables us to live victoriously in times of plenty as well as in lean times (4:12-13), and that He always meets our needs (v. 19).

These truths will lead us to joyful celebrations and away from pity parties.

Father, I will rejoice daily in You! In Jesus’ name, amen.

When Patience Grows Thin

Be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near (James 5:8).

Scripture: James 5:1-11

Song: "What If It Were Today?"

My patience grows thin when I push my grocery cart with a few items into a checkout lane that is reserved for 10 or fewer items and find myself behind a person whose cart has much more than 10 items. Patience grows thin, too, when I stop for a traffic light behind a driver who doesn't move when the light turns green.

Shame on me! These are the times I should remind myself of Job and marvel at his patience. He lost his servants, livestock, sons and daughters, and health. Besides all that misfortune, his wife urged him to curse God and die. And his so-called friends misjudged him—they were sure God was punishing him because he had sinned. Nevertheless, Job retained patient trust in God. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," he said (Job 13:15, *KJV*).

When all the trials ended, the Lord vindicated Job. He also rewarded Job with more sheep, camels, oxen, and donkeys than he had before the trials struck; plus God gave Job seven sons, three daughters, and a long life that enabled him to see his offspring to the fourth generation (42:10-16).

From Job's example and James's instruction, we should take a big-picture view and not devote energy to impatience over life's little inconveniences.

Father, help me to be patient with circumstances and people. In Jesus' name, amen.

A New Day for the Nations

Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance (Psalm 82:8).

Scripture: Psalm 82

Song: “We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations”

I learned at age 3 that international strife is real. When Hitler was revving up his war machine and shedding blood in Europe, my parents, older brother, and I boarded the SS *Athena* and sailed from Liverpool, England, to Montreal, Canada. On the ship’s next voyage, when it was just off the coast of Ireland, the *Athena* was struck by a torpedo from one of Hitler’s U-boats. That tragic event occurred early in the Second World War. But the end of that war did not bring lasting peace.

International strife has continued. Jesus prophesied that nation would rise against nation (Matthew 24:7) before He judges them. But a new day lies ahead. Jesus will officially inherit the nations and rule over them (Revelation 12:5). His reign will be marked by justice, righteousness, and tranquility (Isaiah 9:7). Until that day, we ought to introduce others to the Prince of Peace while we pray for His kingdom to arrive.

Father, we know that the world will not experience total rest until Jesus returns. Come, Lord Jesus! In Jesus’ name, amen.

Pray for Missionaries

[Jesus] said to his disciples, . . . “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37-38).

Scripture: Matthew 9:27-38

Song: “Send the Light”

In 1956, five missionaries were martyred in an Ecuadorian jungle by Auca Indians who speared them to death. However, in response to the martyrdoms, hundreds of young Christians, including students at Moody Bible Institute (where I was attending at the time), dedicated their lives for missionary service. Today many Aucas are believers. The name Aucas, given by other tribes in the day, comes from the Quechua word for “savages.” But today the tribe is known as Huaorani, meaning “true people.” Perhaps the name change pays tribute to the power of the gospel carried by people who chose to go into a foreign mission field.

Christian mission researchers say there are about 440,000 foreign Christian missionaries worldwide. These are people who chose to leave their home countries to go share the gospel. This number might seem large, but researchers say this is not even one missionary for every 50,000 unreached people. The need for missionaries is still great. We all might not be able to go at this time, but we all can ask the Lord of the harvest to call and send workers into His harvest field to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). Let's not let today end without offering that prayer.

Father, much of the world lies in spiritual darkness. Please call and send missionaries to carry the light into the darkness. And strengthen me to remain willing to help. In Jesus' name, amen.

Honesty Is the Best Policy

[God said to Moses,] “Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity” (Leviticus 19:35).

Scripture: Leviticus 19:32-37

Song: “I’ll Live for Him”

My wife and I like to live it up occasionally, so there we were at Taco Bell, where I overheard an interesting conversation. The young man working the counter asked his manager, “See that woman in the parking lot? I shortchanged her three cents. What do you think I should do?”

The manager replied, “Well, what would Jesus do?”

“I don’t know,” the young man responded. “Jesus never worked at Taco Bell, did He?”

Of course Jesus never worked at Taco Bell, but He always did the right thing. He never lied. He never defrauded anyone. He was thoroughly righteous and faultless. He stood against dishonesty, as is clear from His act of overthrowing the tables in the temple and driving out the unscrupulous money changers (Matthew 21:12-13). Perhaps His integrity persuaded Zacchaeus, a tax collector, to suggest, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount” (Luke 19:8).

Christians should be people of integrity. Romans 12:17 exhorts us to “provide things honest in the sight of all men” (*KJV*). Who knows, our acts of honesty might just give us an opportunity to introduce Jesus to someone.

Father, help me to reflect Jesus by being a person of integrity in every transaction. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Be Fair!

Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates (Deuteronomy 24:14, *KJV*).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 24:10-21

Song: “Make Me a Blessing”

Whenever I look at an apple, drink apple juice, or eat apple pie, my mind races back six decades to my first year as a young minister in New York State. My wife was pregnant and anticipating a C-section and a hospital stay, but we didn't have health insurance. So I got a second job in the fall as an apple picker. Most of my fellow workers were migrants who followed harvests from state to state. To the apple grower's credit, he treated all of us alike. He did not tell me to pick apples from the low branches and direct the migrants to pick apples from the top branches. I climbed tall ladders just as the migrants did, and believe me, the trees were tall! The apple grower paid all of us the same amount.

The Bible promotes fair treatment of all and censures discrimination. The epistle of James defines “pure and faultless” religion in part as looking after widows and orphans (James 1:27). James 2:1-9 condemns discrimination and lauds the command to love our neighbors. James 5:1-6 makes it clear that God will judge rich bosses who defraud their workers. Beyond all that is the significant fact that Jesus ministered to the poor and outcasts.

If we want to be like Jesus, we must relate to others fairly and compassionately.

Father, help me to always remember and follow Your pattern of fairness. In Jesus' name, amen.