

## Turning Grief into Gratitude

**Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship** (Job 1:20).

**Scripture:** Job 1:8-11, 13-22

**Song:** “It Is Well with My Soul”

Following the death of his wife, Joy, C. S. Lewis journaled about his anger, misery, memories, and doubts of God. These thoughts he curated into *A Grief Observed* to recount how he realized the true quality of his faith in God and love for Him by walking through sorrow with God instead of holding it against Him. By not holding anything back from God, Lewis experienced God’s goodness in deeper, more transformative ways. Lewis received peace and gratitude in his circumstances.

Job too understood that every good gift comes from God, and that gratitude is due even when those gifts seem all too temporary. God’s goodness and faithfulness did not decrease as Job’s troubles increased. Job was still inspired to worship amid his loss.

When we honor God, there is no tragedy, grief, or doubt He cannot use for the good of those who love Him. Even within loss there are opportunities to understand God better and grow more intimate with Him. When we turn our mourning into gratitude instead of bitterness, we open ourselves to experiencing God’s goodness in deeper, richer ways.

**Father,** thank You for Your eternal goodness in the midst of grief. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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February 14–20. **Megan L. Anderson** is often covered in muddy paw-prints of the clients of her dog-care business. She also enjoys walking with and feeding her human friends.

## Holiness Through Hardship

**LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, LORD, have appointed [the Babylonians] to execute judgment** (Habakkuk 1:12).

**Scripture:** Habakkuk 1:12-17

**Song:** “Father, in This Suffering”

Humorist Emma Bombeck has noted that worry is about as effective as a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but doesn't take you anywhere. Focusing on the world's ever-shifting cares is a dangerous waste of energy; it only mars one's character and makes life a tiring cycle. Stability and freedom can only be found in all-knowing Jesus, who has already prepared the way for His people through whatever difficulties lie ahead.

Habakkuk questioned why God would allow the Babylonians to take Jerusalem by force, devastate His temple, and disperse His people. Though Habakkuk was concerned about the difficulties to come, he did not question God's holiness. Habakkuk recognized God as everlasting and trusted His righteous hand over the people of Judah.

When we focus on God's character in hardship, we can begin to see our circumstances as opportunities to experience His faithfulness in new ways. Declaring what we know to be true of God—that He is holy, everlasting, loving, just, and sovereign—grounds our faith through our questions and troubles. As He delivers us through those difficult times, His faithfulness steadies and encourages us, and we continue moving forward in trust and belief.

**Father**, during trouble and worry, help us trust You and stand as witnesses to Your loving faithfulness. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Passion in Oppression

**Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps** (1 Peter 2:21).

**Scripture:** 1 Peter 2:20-25

**Song:** “Faith of Our Fathers”

When Anne Askew refused to compromise her biblical convictions, her husband cast her into the streets. There she became an influential evangelist. Anne’s husband had her arrested for heresy multiple times, but she always eagerly returned to ministry. In 1546, Anne was imprisoned and tortured but refused to incriminate fellow believers or renounce her faith. Her endurance impressed the Tower of London’s constable so much that he personally appealed to King Henry VIII for her pardon. Even while bound to the stake, Anne affirmed gospel truths and spoke against the bishop’s misuse of Scripture as he tried to compel her into recanting. Anne’s commitment to God’s Word and her faithfulness to the end continue pointing others to Christ’s example today.

Anne knew the risks of sharing God’s truth in a hostile world. She also knew that any sacrifice was worth making when viewed in light of the glorious riches of eternal life. Anne recognized God’s ultimate authority over earthly powers, and trusted that He would reward her good and faithful service.

We too can rely on God’s justice, God’s approval, and the presence of His Spirit in the face of opposition, if we remain true to Him. By adhering to and sharing God’s Word despite persecution, we can leave legacies of faith that point others to Christ for generations to come.

**Father**, fan the flames of passion in me for Your truth that I may boldly share it despite opposition. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Stewards of God's Strength and Peace

**Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. . . . The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace** (Psalm 29:2, 11).

**Scripture:** Psalm 29

**Song:** "He's Everything to Me"

At 15 years old I went to an Australian cattle station a hemisphere away from home. I experienced vast deserts, wild lightning and thunder, exotic animals, and trees taller than any I had ever seen. The stars appeared brighter, closer, and more numerous than in Indiana. Even the cattle seemed livelier compared to the ambling Holsteins back home. Being in Australia felt like an echo of Eden. There was a heady sense that God might come walking through the garden at any moment! When my plane landed back in Indianapolis, I could not wait to share my newfound awe of God after experiencing these overwhelming displays of His splendor.

David's awe of the Lord's majesty spilled into songs of passionate, reverent praise brimming with examples of God's authority over this magnificent world He created. Psalm 29 encourages us to join in that praise and glorify God as we declare His sovereignty over all creation. His demonstrations of might and beauty in nature bless us with reminders of the strength He offers to carry us through every good work of ministry and worship that we offer in His name.

**Father,** thank You for filling the earth with inspiring reminders of Your power and sovereignty. Help me recognize these gifts and respond with worship and grateful service. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Sacrificing for Justice

**When [Jesus] came back, he again found [the disciples] sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him** (Mark 14:40).

**Scripture:** Mark 14:32-42

**Song:** “Christ for the World We Sing”

When Fannie Lou Hamer tried to register to vote, she was kicked off the plantation where her family lived and worked. Fannie then dedicated herself to the Civil Rights movement. Because of her peaceful activism, she was repeatedly shot at, arrested, and beaten nearly to death. She also lost her daughter, whom the local hospital turned away. Having experienced the struggles of poverty, sexism, lack of education, and unspeakable injustice firsthand, she pioneered philanthropic programs such as the Freedom Farm Collective to improve opportunities and quality of life for Mississippi's African American community. Despite the high personal cost, Hamer tirelessly acted on her concern for others, always pointing to God as the source of her strength.

Fannie Lou Hamer's legacy reflects how Jesus selflessly served the impoverished and oppressed. Though He did nothing to deserve the sorrows of sin that could only be cleansed by His sacrifice, He leaned on the Father's strength and continued His mission to the point of death.

Jesus' closest friends failed Him in His hour of greatest need. But we have a Savior who sticks closer than a brother and indwells and strengthens us to serve, despite any oppression we may face. With Him, we can do all things.

**Father**, let us not be deterred by injustice, but inspired to work Your will. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Seaworthy Faith

**[God said,] “Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb?”** (Job 38:8).

**Scripture:** Job 38:1-11

**Song:** “Naked as from the Earth We Came”

The *Titanic* was built for transporting passengers but also as a testament to human affluence and ingenuity. No expense was spared in appointing the largest ocean liner at the time with features to lure the wealthy. Though the ship’s unique design prioritized opulence over function, some called it “unsinkable.” But only five days into her maiden voyage, *Titanic* sank. The captain of the rescue ship *Carpathia*, Sir James Bisset, attributed the tragedy to over-confidence, explaining that the ship had been built to impress, not to hold up.

God challenged any over-confidence Job might have had regarding how the world works. Job wasn’t present when God created the sea—or anything else. We must test the “seaworthiness” of our faith. A faith that focuses on looking holy over building a substantial relationship with God leads only to danger.

We can have knowledge of God, give thanks for the securities and comforts around us, and yet still not be equipped to withstand life’s storms. That is, unless we allow God to strip away any unnecessary distractions and build our faith to last. Thankfully, His love offers a lifeboat when we scuttle ourselves on the rocks of selfish ambition and vain conceit.

**Father**, humble and inspire us with reminders of Your supremacy, and build our faith to last. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Rejoicing in Blamelessness

**“[God] will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy” (Job 8:21).**

**Scripture:** Job 8:1-10, 20-22

**Song:** “Trading My Sorrows”

Novelist John Irving once described his life as a process of revision. He scoured his manuscripts for flaws to correct, and he turned that same critical gaze inward—as humbling and difficult as that can be.

Job’s friend Bildad argued that Job needed to search himself for faults and transgressions, citing Job’s misfortunes as evidence that something must be wrong with him (Job 8:20). Though Job was certainly surrounded by miserable circumstances, none of them were of his own making. God recognized Job as “blameless and upright”; there was nothing within Job that should cause his suffering (1:8).

We all have flaws and make mistakes that we can work on. But not every bad thing that happens to us is necessarily punishment for something we did. When we search our hearts in the light of Scripture, our spiritual weaknesses and failings become evident and confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit. Thankfully, God knows that we can’t fix everything about ourselves or make ourselves righteous. But when we accept His gift of salvation through faith then God forgives us and makes us blameless, and that gives us joy.

**Father,** thank You for sacrificing Your Son and raising Him again to make us blameless and upright in Your eyes. Help us be attentive to Your Holy Spirit as You guide us with joy through the process of repentance and sanctification. In Jesus’ name, amen.