

Praise Him for the **future**

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance (Psalm 42:5).



The atheist says, "There is no God"; the agnostic, "We can't know for sure that there is a God"; the liberal, "It doesn't matter if there is a God." But the Christian says, "Praise God."

We don't know what tomorrow holds for any of us. Last year, many people faced sickness, job loss, financial insecurity, drug addictions, or the loss of a loved one. This year, many others will

find themselves dealing with these same issues. We live in a society that seems to be coming apart at the seams. Somewhere in the world every day, people face floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, terrorism, or some other crisis. The news leaves you feeling overwhelmed, often by fear. The only sure thing is that life is uncertain. Only God knows what our tomorrows hold. And God is in control.

I don't know about tomorrow, I just live from day to day
 I don't borrow from its sunshine, for its skies may turn to gray
 I don't worry o'er the future, for I know what Jesus said
 And today I'll walk beside Him, for He knows what is ahead.

Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to understand
 But, I know Who holds tomorrow, and I know Who holds my hand

I don't know about tomorrow, it may bring me poverty
 But the One Who feeds the sparrow is the One Who stands by me
 And the path that is my portion may be through the flame or flood
 But His Presence goes before me and I'm covered by His blood.

I Don't Know About Tomorrow
 Ira F. Stanphill

This song, "I Don't Know About Tomorrow," penned by Ira F. Stanphill in 1950 just about sums it up. The song speaks of our faith in difficult times, because we know that God knows the future and is always with us. We can place our trust in Him, because He is able to see what lies down the road. What does it mean for a Christian to know tomorrow is in God's Hands? It has everything to do with whom we know God to be. He is *our* God, *our* Father in Jesus Christ.

Source of Hope

Many scholars believe David wrote Psalm 42 during his flight from his son Absalom, who wanted him killed so he could inherit the throne. David was on the run, away from the long-loved house of his God. At the same time, it is the voice of a spiritual believer longing for the renewal of the Divine Presence, struggling with doubts and fears, yet holding his ground by faith in the living God.

In verse one, David depicts the deer almost spent, hunted down; the dogs in full pursuit; parched and panting for water, comes to the river and plunges in as his last refuge. Likewise, pursued, spent, and ready to give up, the psalmist pants for God, for the living God.

Have you ever felt spent, not only physically, but spiritually as well? Have there been days when you longed to feel the relieving water of God's Spirit pour over you?

The psalmist does not pretend trouble and sorrow do not exist in the life of one who loves God. However, in the midst of his sorrow, he reminds himself to find his source of hope. He knows hope does not lie in circumstances but in the God who is over the circumstances.

A Christian's true character is often revealed when he faces a real problem. How do you handle your problems? Do you panic? Complain? The believers' reaction should be one of prayer, humility, praise, and trust.

Reflective Questions

Where does your hope for tomorrow lie?

Do you have assurance in your heart that you belong to God through forgiveness of your sins through Jesus?

Can you look to God for strength and peace in whatever you face in the future?

His Plans

Psalm 146 begins with “Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. While I live will I praise the LORD; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.”

What if praise isn’t so much about our longing for what’s good about the past but rather trusting in God’s promised future in the midst of an uncertain present?

The thing about God’s promised future is that while we know it is trustworthy, good, and life-giving, we also know it may not come when we expect it or in the way we expect it. Trusting and praising like that is certainly hard to do. We trust a God who knows what we need better than we know ourselves. We trust and allow ourselves to be open and even obedient to God’s plans. The words of the prophet Jeremiah remind us that God’s thoughts toward us are of peace and not of evil, to give us an expected end (Jeremiah 29:11).

Psalm 37 says not to worry about or envy those who do

wrong, because they will fade away. Instead, we should rest in Him and wait patiently for Him to act—easy words to say, but harder to put into practice. I want to see evildoers and the wicked cut down, *now*. I’m tired of seeing innocent people struck down for no reason. I question why God doesn’t do something, instead of waiting for some future time. But God’s ways are high above mine. The thing is, God has promised us hope for the future, a future that does not include the wicked or evil.

Maybe we can’t praise God for how our world is today, but we can praise Him for the plans He has already made, plans that will relieve whatever pain we may suffer in this life. Like the psalmist in Psalm 42, we find ourselves asking, “Why am I so downcast in my soul; why am I so disturbed within my heart?” We, too, must remind ourselves to fix our eyes on God and praise Him, our salvation and God.

Reflective Questions

How do you react when life is uncertain?

How does Jeremiah 29:11 bring you peace?

Accept the Bad

Praise is more than just acknowledging God for the good that comes our way; it is also accepting the bad. Someone once said, "Nothing comes into the life of a Christian but what God permits or ordains." If God didn't ordain it, He permitted it. Praise takes our minds off the situation and focuses on God. It acknowledges God's right to rule and reign in our lives however He sees fit.

Everyday we see news of war, destruction, and impending conflict raging all over the world. It may seem nearly impossible to consider all the turmoil befalling the world without being afraid, but God is our refuge in the midst of total destruction. Praise God! He is not a temporary respite or retreat. He is our eternal refuge and can provide strength for any circumstance we may face. Praise God that He is always a safe hiding place.

Reflective Questions

How does it make you feel to know that God either permits or ordains whatever comes into your life, good or bad? Explain.

Do you struggle with acknowledging God's right to rule and reign in your life however He sees fit?

Spend time asking God to provide strength for the circumstances you are facing right now. If your life is pretty smooth at this time, spend time praising Him for that.

Ultimate Destiny

Praise is also our ultimate destiny. When Jesus returns to earth, all creation, including prideful humanity, will recognize His glory and praise Him (Philippians 2:9-11). Despite what the news media may indicate, God still sits on the throne of Heaven ruling all things well. As we look around, the evidence seems to show that Satan is ruler of the kings of the earth. However, it only seems that way. Satan has no power except that granted to him by God.

In due time, and at the proper moment, Jesus will step back onto center stage of world history. The hands that were nailed to the cross will be revealed as ruler of the world. Though we do not see it today, it is certain and sure of fulfillment. We must stand firm in our faith that God is in perfect and loving control of every detail surrounding us. We can express that faith by praising and thanking God in every situation. Standing firm in faith means we must decide to accept God's Word that He is in charge, regardless of what we feel or what outward circumstances may look like.

The Bible firmly states that God is in charge of every storm, earthquake, tornado, war, famine, pestilence, birth, death, sparrow, flower in the field, and hair on our head. We will have to decide whether or not to believe Him all the way. Psalm 108:1 says, "O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise, even with my glory."

Reflective Questions

What hinders you from singing praise to God even though you know He is in control of your circumstances?

How can you fix your heart upon God?

About the Writer: Judy Delong has been a member of Tom's Creek Free Will Baptist Church in Nippa, Kentucky, for 44 years. She serves on her local WAC mission action committee, as East Kentucky District's study chairman, and as a member-at-large for Kentucky WAC. Judy has been married to Teddy for over 50 years and they have three sons, eight grandchildren, and one great grandson.