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I Know Who Holds Tomorrow

*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.*

*Ev'ry step is getting brighter
As the golden stairs I climb;
Ev'ry burden's getting lighter,
Evr'y cloud is silver lined.
There the sun is always shining,
There no tear will dim the eye;
At the ending of the rainbow,
Where the mountains touch the sky.*

*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 be my portion
May be thru the flame or flood,
But His presence goes before me,
And I'm covered with His blood.*

*Refrain:
Many things about tomorrow
I don't seem to understand;
But I know who holds tomorrow,
And I know who holds my hand.*

WORDS: Ira Stamphill (w. 1950)

MUSIC: Ira Stamphill (w.1950)



Tell Me the Story of Jesus

The sun was shining in through the dusty windows. There was no sound but a breeze from the countryside beyond the windows, no sound in the room but the ticking of a clock on a shelf. We had laughed and chatted for quite a while, but now there was one of those inevitable lulls in the conversation. We sat quietly, comfortably together.

Unprompted, she suddenly looked at me and asked in her wavering voice, "Do you mind if I sing a song?"

"I'd love to hear you sing a song."

She reached to the table beside her chair, a table piled with cards and pictures and bills and letters, and somewhere from that pile, she pulled out a piece of paper with the words of a song typed on it. Then, halting at first but steadier as she went along, she began to sing in a voice stretched thin with age and illness.

*Tell me the story of Jesus, write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious, sweetest that ever was heard;*

Tell how the angels in chorus sang as they welcomed His birth;

"Glory to God in the highest! Peace and good tidings on earth."

Fasting alone in the desert, tell of the days that are passed,

How for our sins He was tempted, yet was triumphant at last;

*Tell of the years of His labor, tell of the sorrow He bore,
He was despised and afflicted, Homeless, rejected, and poor.*

Tell of the cross where they nailed Him, writhing in anguish and pain;

Tell of the grave where they laid Him, Tell how He liveth again.

Love, in that story so tender, clearer than ever I see;

Stay, let me weep while you whisper, "Love paid the ransom for me."

Tell me the story of Jesus, write on my heart every word;

Tell me the story most precious, sweetest that ever was heard.

I was never sure whether she had wanted me to join her in the song, but I didn't. I just sat and listened as she slowly sang each verse. The dust motes swirled in the afternoon shafts of sunlight, and the clock ticked softly on the shelf. And in that moment, it came to my heart so clearly the power of faith as this elderly woman sang this song, even as the sunlight lowered and the clock ticked.

Because, you know, all our clocks are always ticking, measuring time – time finite and avaricious. With the fall of the world and the presence of sin, time has become our enemy, eventually stealing health and beauty and loved ones and life itself. As Shakespeare put it, "Time is the king of men; he's both their parent and their grave." We can fill our days with noise to drown out the sound, but time's clock continues to tick on and on nevertheless.

Yet a man once stepped out of eternity into time and took on time's burden. He was a man like no other, fully man yet fully God. He had always existed, untouched by time's degradations, able to observe all of time's elements from outside of it. But for our sakes, He gave that up and confined Himself to 33 years of time. He experienced life as each of us experiences it – from totally dependent infancy to childhood to adulthood.

Unlike us, though, He lived His time knowing fully the circumstances and agony of His death, knowing the coming abandonment of those He had called and taught, knowing that the choice remained His whether or not to endure it. Each day as He taught, healed, and loved, He knew He was one day closer to that sacrifice. More than any of us ever could, He heard His clock.

Yet Jesus could look beyond time's barriers to something infinitely greater and more joyous.

... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

Jesus is indeed the founder of our faith, and in His example we see faith perfected in perfect obedience. He has shown us what faith looks like, and He has let us know, that as terrible as the cross was, what lay beyond that and what He has secured for us, is just that much more wonderful.

And because He is the founder of our faith, an elderly woman struck by time's ravages can sing about Him with full assurance that the object of her faith is certain. When she has already endured so much, she knows she can endure even more because she looks in faith to Jesus. She can be certain that there is no sweeter, more precious story she could ever know. With faith so can I, and so can you.

So, let that old clock continue to tick, and my days be consumed. It's really all right. Just tell me ... the story of Jesus.

Ina McKune, Rolla, Missouri



Precious Faith

As I grow older, I find myself attending more and more funerals, and they are usually for folks my age or younger. As time passes, I have noticed some distinct differences in those for people who never professed to be Christians, and those who have been faithful servants.

Funerals for non-Christians tend to be much smaller. I have attended several funerals where there were immediate family members and maybe half a dozen friends in attendance. Some of those deceased lived long enough to outlive their close friends. Some spent their last years in a nursing home and thus were eventually forgotten by others. A few lived isolated lives by choice. Their circle of influence was quite small at that point.

Those funerals were extremely sad for me for two reasons. The first was the small number of lives that person had touched, and second but foremost was their lost condition. Everyone at such a service is morose and often in deep flowing tears. Scripture teaches that Jesus is the only way to heaven, and we are given specific instructions; yet at almost every funeral I have ever attended, the officiant assured the family of how secure the deceased is. I understand the desire to comfort a grieving family, but what a horrible disservice to those who remain if that person was not a faithful Christian. A preacher's words cannot change the status of someone who has died, but he certainly has the responsibility to not misguide the living. I have also been blessed to

attend such a service conducted by a gospel preacher who did comfort the family with cherished memories, but also preached the need to obey. That had to be a very difficult day for him. May God bless that man, and the people he preached to that day.

A funeral for a Christian is so much different. Recently, I attended the service for a faithful brother who had turned 81. He was old enough to have outlived many of his friends, and yet the room was full, and people stood in the hall at his funeral. Friends and family spoke and told of his good deeds, his sense of humor and his love for others. There were tears for our loss, but there was also an overall theme of laughter and joy. Many stories were told of his joking and his service and interacting with us. The tears were for us and how we would miss this beautiful soul. They were certainly not because we doubted his future outside this earthly body. There were older folks there, but there were also middle-aged couples and many young teenagers, and even babies, who had been touched by this man's influence. What a contrast that occasion was to the one I described earlier.

What a blessing it is to have that assurance. How precious it is to be able to rely on those promises of eternal joy. Sometimes we struggle with daily living, and we may doubt our ability to follow the commands, and yet God has promised He will be with us to the end. When we struggle with the trials of life, we can know God is not only there, but He will remain right there with us if we obey. Christians can and should be assured of their security in their faith. How very precious is that faith, not only when we die, but as we travel toward that final goal.

By Wilburta Arrowood, Napoleonville, Louisiana



FAITH IS

Faith is *the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* We know that we do not always get our desired results of our petitions to God, but we also know that His workings are better than anything we can imagine.

Faith lives. *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart,* Hebrews 4:12. Faith lives when our constant spiritual diet is the word of God. Just as we feed our bodies regularly, we must daily feed our minds the word of God. Faith lives when we teach the gospel to others and lead them to obedience to God.

Faith grows. Faith grows as we study and learn His will for us. Faith grows as we see God's work in our hearts. Faith grows when we associate with faithful, active Christians. Faith grows when we experience hardship or tragedy and rely on God to see us through. Faith grows as we see our prayers answered.

Faith is precious. First century Christians believed to their core that their faith was precious and that losing their lives was better than forsaking their faith. When persecution came, they chose deprivation and/or death rather than renouncing their faith. Many were fed to the lions, burned at the stake, or were staked out on the beach at low tide and subsequently drowned. Their faith was so precious to them that they chose death rather than to renounce Christ. Few of us in this country have been tested to that degree.

Faith costs. Our faith may cost us family relationships and/or friendships. It can cost us employment if our work environment is not suitable for Christians, or if employers do not respect our faith. Faith costs us time spent teaching the gospel to friends, relatives, co-workers, or others. Time spent teaching the gospel is well worth it. No cost is so high that we should abandon our faith.

Faith needs. Faith needs to be fed regularly. Faith needs quiet time spent reading and studying God's word. Faith needs regular communication with God through prayer. Faith needs personal time spent in private worship to God. Faith needs invaluable time in worship with Christians of like faith.

Faith gives. Faith gives love to others. Faith gives us strength to get through difficult times in life. Faith gives us the assurance of heaven.

Faith thanks. Faith thanks God for blessings – spiritual blessings, physical blessings, relational blessings. Faith thanks God for life itself. Faith thanks God for loved ones and time spent with them. Faith thanks God for family, health, monetary means, and so on. Faith thanks those around us who encourage us on our journey to eternity.

Faith fuels. Faith fuels our prayers as we ask for His guidance, His care for our families, and many other requests we place before Him. Faith fuels the level of our commitment to God and the church.

Faith must be guarded. Paul wrote to his son in the faith, *"O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge.'* 1 Timothy 6:20. He also wrote in 2

Timothy 1:14, "By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you." We must guard our faith from the snares of satan. We must know the traps and snares that satan employs against us. We must resist him and avoid his traps. The "jaws" of satan can be compared to the Venus fly trap that snaps shut on unsuspecting insects.

Faith sets an example. Faith is exemplified in the lives of Old Testament characters such as Daniel. When his people were taken captive to Babylon, Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank. *"But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself."* Daniel 1:8.

Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-nego, were also taken to Babylon as captives. When King Nebuchadnezzar built a golden image, he ordered *"all peoples, nations and men of every language to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up,"* Daniel 3:4-5. Shadrach, Meshak, and Abed-nego refused to worship the image and were cast into *"a furnace of blazing fire."* (Daniel 3:11) They refused to bow down and were subsequently bound and cast into the fiery furnace. They were protected from the fire and suffered no ill effects from the fire. Their faith led to a decree by Nebuchadnezzar that no one could speak offensively against the God of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abed-nego or they would be destroyed.

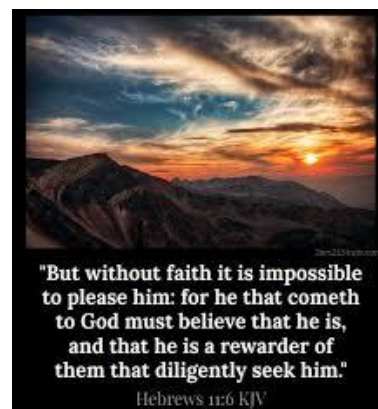
Saul (later called Paul) sought to harm Christians. On his way to Damascus to destroy them, he was surrounded by a great light and was converted (Acts 9:1-19). He never regretted having obeyed God. His obedience led him to preach, teach, and write for the remainder of his life. Paul suffered many hardships as he recounted in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28, *"²⁴Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches."*

Faith can be lost! Tragedies, cancer, starvation, and other hardships can lead to a weak faith or even to the loss of faith. Influence of ungodly friends sometimes lures Christians away. We must not be unequally yoked with those who "march to a different drum."

This article began with Hebrews 11:1, and it ends the same way. ***Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.***

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, Missouri

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Do not fear what you are about to suffer. ... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Revelation 2:10

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Fred Willmon

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A graphic for the 'Sunrise' newsletter. It features a background image of a snowy mountain landscape with evergreen trees. Overlaid on the image is the word 'Sunrise' in a large, stylized, cursive font. Below it, in a smaller, sans-serif font, is the text 'The Newsletter For Women By Christian Women'. At the bottom of the graphic, there is a white text box with a black border containing a paragraph of text about the newsletter.

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