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Sing to Me of Heaven

*Sing to me of heaven,
sing that song of peace,
From the toils that bind me
it will bring release;
Burdens will be lifted
that are pressing so,
Showers of great blessing
o'er my heart will flow.*

*Sing to me of heaven,
as I walk alone,
Dreaming of the comrades
that so long have gone;
In a fairer region 'mong the angel throng,
They are happy as they sing that old,
sweet song.*

*Sing to me of heaven,
tenderly and low,
Till the shadows o'er me
rise and swiftly go;
When my heart is weary,
when the day is long,
Sing to me of heaven,
sing that old sweet song.*

Refrain:

*Sing to me of heaven,
let me fondly dream
Of its golden glory,
of its pearly gleam;
Sing to me when shadows
of the evening fall,
Sing to me of heaven,
sweetest song of all*

WORDS: Ada Powell (w. 1914)

MUSIC: Benjamin B. Beall (w. 1914)



Great Expectations

In his famous novel *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens tells the story of young Philip Pirrip, nicknamed Pip, and his expectations in life. When the story opens, 7-year old orphaned Pip sneaks out to visit the grave of his parents, and in the village churchyard he is shocked to encounter an escaped convict. The convict, named Magwitch, terrifies little Pip into stealing food for him, but later when Magwitch is re-captured, he clears Pip of any blame by claiming he stole the food himself. Magwitch is then deported to a penal colony in Australia.

A few years later Pip meets his reclusive and eccentric (to say the least) neighbor, Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham was jilted at the altar years before, and she always wears her yellowed wedding dress and spends her time in a room with her molding wedding cake. Now Miss Havisham may be strange but she is also very rich, and when as a young man Pip finds that an anonymous benefactor has left him a fortune, he assumes that she has provided him these “great expectations” for his future. Pip moves to London to embark on his education as a gentleman, but there he develops a disdain for his humble family and friends back home.

Pip is in for a surprise, though. He learns that after completing his prison sentence, Magwitch acquired a fortune in Australia and that he, not Miss Havisham, is the mysterious benefactor. Subsequently, Pip begins a winding journey of discovering the good in Magwitch, uncovering his own moral failures, losing his fortune, reconciling with family, and realizing that his expectations in life are not what he expected but better than he had hoped.

In the life of young Pip, Dickens explored the meaning of the word, “expectations.” Perhaps you have explored the meaning of that word as well this infamous year of 2020. We all began this year with certain expectations for 2020. We had expectations for events we would attend,

people we would visit, trips we would take, routines we would maintain. Of course, we start every year that way, but in reality we never really know what will happen or what we can control. We never know what a day will bring. This year, however, the events of 2020 have made that realization painfully clear.

Like Pip we don't always get what we expect. We don't even always have what we think we have. On the contrary, we may be on a journey that leads us to something different than we ever expected. For the Christian, however, it can be something even better than was ever expected. God has given us a very special promise in this regard:

And we know for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

Think back over this year and reflect on what God has worked for good in your life because of, or despite, the pandemic. Have you spent more time studying the Bible



on a deeper level than ever before? Have you prayed more often and more earnestly than ever before? Have superficial things become less and less

important to you? Have you realized more keenly than ever the value of Christian fellowship and community? Have you had to think outside the box to find ways to continue to serve and share? Have you reflected more seriously than ever about the brevity of life and the reality of eternity? Or you may have seen some entirely different "working for good" that God is doing in your life.

James stated this principle of God's working in your life in this way:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4

Keep loving Him, keep allowing yourself to be called according to His purpose, and keep watching how He works. God wants you to mature in Him, to have everything you truly need, even if you don't have

everything you want. He has Great Expectations in mind for you.

Ina McKune, Rolla, MO

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Expectations

What were your expectations when you became a Christian? I hear some media preachers promise God will make you prosperous beyond your greatest hopes, and I have to shake my head. When we read the letters of Paul and the other New Testament writers, we do not see evidence of that. In fact, the Christians at Jerusalem found it needful to sell their goods to help their brothers and sisters who had come to the city to celebrate Pentecost and were converted while there. In Acts 4:34-37 we learn those new Christians had all things common.

Some even sold property to support one another. The apostle Paul probably did not expect what he received as he preached. Take a look at 2 Corinthians 11 and read about how he was whipped, beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, and in peril from robbers, his own countrymen, and heathens, as well as from false brethren. He professes he was often hungry and thirsty, cold, and in nakedness. Besides all that, he says he was concerned for all the churches. That does not sound much like prosperity, fairy dust, and happiness does it?

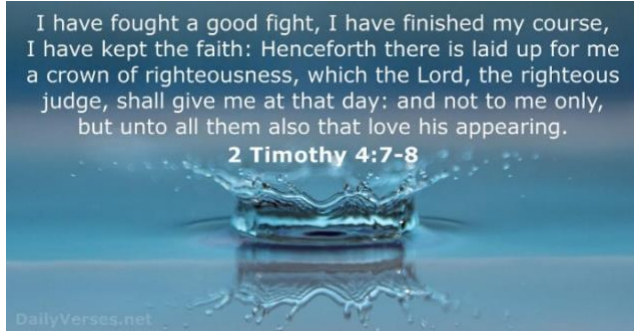
So, what was Paul's expectation? What kept him going when these very unpleasant things happened to him? In Philippians 3:13-14 he tells us, "¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not regard myself as having taken hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." In Romans 1:16 he says, "¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Paul expected salvation for his effort. 2 Corinthians 5:1 tells us, "For we know that if our earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made by hands, eternal in the heavens."

Were Paul's expectations well founded, or was it all wishful thinking? Did you know there are over 7,000 promises in God's Word, per *Promises of God, Second Edition*, by Dr. Lester Sumrall. If we took time to research all those promises, we would find God has not failed to keep even one of them. One of the more noticeable is His promise to make Abraham a great nation. (Genesis 17:4) Done, even though at the time Abraham was an old man and had no heir. He promised to establish Israel as His

holy people. (Deuteronomy 28:9) All through the Old Testament we see God's hand in guiding and at times disciplining the Israelites, but He never left them.

Now, what are our expectations? We expect God to keep His promises to us, and we can find great comfort in those. We are children of God. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name," (John 1:12). I can go through life without fear if I have obeyed God's commands, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, (or fear) but of power and love and discipline." (2 Timothy 1:7). God has not promised it will be easy. He has promised it will be worth it. I can know that whatever happens, I am God's child. If I live, God is with me. If I die, I am God's child and get to live with Him. Sing to me of heaven. I can't wait!

Wilburta Arrowood, Napoleonville, LA
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WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO?

Years ago, I was marking the days off my calendar, counting down the days until my wedding day. Expectations swirled leading to that moment when my dad escorted me down the aisle where my groom was waiting expectantly. That was a wonderful turning point day in my life.

You have seen children bursting with excitement as they wait for the time to open all those intriguing presents under the Christmas tree. They impatiently anticipate great things at birthday time. Many of them eagerly look forward to the start or end of the school year. High school and college students look forward to graduation and the beginning of their careers.

Nowadays, I look forward to seeing my grown children and my far-away extended family. During the COVID-19 shutdown, I waited eagerly for when I could again be with my church family. My best friends are in the church, and the "social distancing" of the day precluded our ability to worship together, enjoy a meal together, even to go shopping together. There were times when I found

myself moping because I could not meet with brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are not the first Christians to be separated by circumstances. The Apostle Paul traveled all over the area from Israel to Rome, sometimes as a prisoner, devoting himself to converting people and establishing churches everywhere he went. When he was in prison in Rome, he longed to see the brethren in all the places he had preached the gospel. The people converted by his teaching were very dear to him, as were the people who traveled with him. He found himself longing to see the brethren, and he wrote letters to congregations he planted and to individuals he longed to see. Those letters are inspired guides for us today, some 2,000 years later.

Have you ever known someone who lived under a perpetual cloud of doom and gloom? They look for bad things to happen every day rather than trusting God to bring good things.

One prophet, Micah, answered that in Micah 7:7 – "*But as for me, I will watch **expectantly** for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will **hear me***" (emphasis added). Matthew 11:3 tells of John the Baptist being in prison and sending disciples to inquire of Jesus, "*Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?*"

Paul anticipated seeing Timothy again (1 Cor. 16:10-11). ¹⁰*Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am.* ¹¹*So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.*

When you read Revelation 21:3-4, does it give you goose bumps? Does it fill your heart with eagerness to be there? How about the description of heaven in Revelation

22:3-5:

³*There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and*

His bond-servants will serve Him; ⁴they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. ⁵And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord

The Work of the Lord in Hospitality (10-12)

- **(1 Corinthians 16:10-12 NKJV)** - Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. {11} Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren.

God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

We are all familiar with expectations. We know of great expectations, high expectations, and low expectations. We usually live up to or down to what is expected of us. Children whose parents never encourage them to try harder and reach for higher goals than they think they can achieve are shortchanged. My parents highly expected me to do well in school, and I did not want to disappoint them. Their expectations caused me to try harder and achieve more than I might have without their encouragement. How about the expectations you have for yourself? You probably have high standards for yourself, and you expect to live up to those standards.

As I have grown older, I find myself eagerly anticipating my next life. That is because my **greatest** expectation is being in the presence of God in Heaven!

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, Missouri

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EXPECTATIONS

There is a book entitled, “Great Expectations,” by Charles Dickens, published in 1860. The main character, Pip, has a very difficult childhood. He lives with his sister and brother-in-law, Joe. Joe loves Pip and does his best to befriend him and teach him about the way he should live. Joe, a very humble man, is a blacksmith. Pip loves Joe but determines when he is older, he’s going to make something of himself, get rich, and live like the rich. He does not want to be a lowly blacksmith.

He succeeds in his expectations, but later in life decides that it is not worth it. Riches are not what he wanted after all. Much happens in between the beginning and end of Pip’s life to bring him to the conclusion that being humble like Joe is the right thing. Pip’s expectations were for riches and the good life, but it was meaningless. It reminds me of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:13 where he

arrived at the conclusion that the only thing that matters is to, “Fear God and keep His commandments.”

Where do our expectations lie? Have we striven for the “good life” of higher education, prestige, power, fame, more money and materials things, outward beauty? In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul says, *“For I am being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now, there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.”*

Paul had given up his power and prestige within the Pharisee sect and his wealth to gain eternal life. He grabbed on to that “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:45-46) and never looked back. He is now ready to receive his eternal reward. Won’t it be grand, to say the least, to be with Paul and all God’s faithful around the great white throne? *“Then I saw the great white throne and Him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from His presence and there was no place for them.”* (Revelation 20:11).

The great expectation for Christians is that glorious home in Heaven. Revelation 22 gives us a small glimpse of the beauty of Heaven, but Revelation is not speaking literally. Streets of gold, precious jewels and pearls are not what Heaven is all about. It is about the glory of the Lord, the light of His presence, the beauty of which we can only imagine and see with the eye of faith for now. But then, we will finally be able to see the face of God!

Our expectations should not be for anything in this realm, but in the next one—Heaven.

Mary Anna Melton, Rolla, MO

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