



DAILY ENCOURAGEMENTS

Carstairs-Bancroft United Church

January 4, 2024



Photo: Our Daily Bread

THE RIGHTEOUS CITY

May he produce in you . . . every good thing that is pleasing to him.

Hebrews 13:21 NLT

READ Hebrews 13:14-21

On New Year's Eve 2000, officials in Detroit carefully opened a hundred-year-old time capsule. Nestled inside the copper box were hopeful predictions from some city leaders who expressed visions of prosperity. The mayor's message, however, offered a different approach. He wrote, "May we be permitted to express one hope superior to all others . . . [that] you may realize as a nation, people, and city, you have grown in righteousness, for it is this that exalts a nation."

More than success, happiness, or peace, the mayor wished that future citizens would grow in what it means to be truly just and upright. Perhaps he took his cue from Jesus, who blessed those who long for His righteousness (Matthew 5:6). But it's easy to get discouraged when we consider God's perfect standard.

Praise God that we don't have to rely on our own effort to grow. The author of Hebrews said it this way: "May the God of peace . . . equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 13:20–21). We who are in Christ are made holy by His blood the moment we believe in Him (v. 12), but He actively grows the fruit of righteousness in our hearts throughout a lifetime. We'll often stumble on the journey, yet still we look forward to "the city that is to come" where God's righteousness will reign (v. 14).

By Karen Pimpo

PRAY & REFLECT

Dear God, please work in me what's pleasing to You. Amen

For what Christlike attributes would you like to be known? How can you encourage others to seek God's righteousness?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The anonymous author of the book of Hebrews wrote to Jewish believers in Jesus who were suffering because of persecution, encouraging them to persevere in their faith and to endure suffering for the sake of Christ - to "[bear] the disgrace he bore" (Hebrews 13:13). Believers in Jesus can persevere because, as the author reminds us, "This world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come" (v. 14 NLT). The author cites examples of believers who in faith (Ch. 11) chose to suffer for Christ because they were looking for an eternal home in heaven. Abraham looked "forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (v. 10). Moses "regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. . . He persevered because he saw him who is invisible" (vv. 26-27). – By **K. T. Sim**

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