

## Free as an Heir

**You are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir** (Galatians 4:7).

**Scripture:** Galatians 4:1-7

**Song:** "Child of the King"

The world remembers John F. Kennedy Jr. as the 3-year-old boy saluting his father's coffin. But before this sad turn of events, another world had existed for John-John, one in which he freely roamed the White House. He hopped around on the carpet in the Oval Office. He walked past the presidential desk, dressed in a Peter Panda costume. And he had access to the candy dish on the secretary's desk. John-John enjoyed these extraordinary freedoms and privileges precisely because he was the president's son.

As God's own children through Christ, we are beloved and invited to come freely—boldly even—into His throne room of grace. In His presence we have free access to His tender mercies and His help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). And now freed from our sin to live as God's children, we have been made heirs of His eternal kingdom.

Like John-John in the White House, we can enjoy the blessings and privileges of our Father's domain each day, and we also look forward to our forever home with Him as those who, through Christ, will inherit eternal life.

**Father,** we thank You for the freedoms and inheritance that are ours in Christ. In Jesus' name, amen.

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May 16–22. **Martin Wiles** is a Christ follower who is also a teacher, pastor, freelance editor, author, husband, father, and grandfather. He has authored seven books and has been published in numerous publications.

## Confidence in Christ

**I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord** (Philippians 3:8).

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:1-8a

**Song:** “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less”

Middle schoolers are an interesting group. I teach around 100 of them, and every year I watch them compete . . . and not just in sports. When they think I’m not listening to their hushed conversations, I usually am. I hear some of them talk about where their parents work and how much they earn. They brag about their family vacations and how much money their parents spend. And of course they tell about their name-brand clothes and how much those cost. In large part their self-image and sense of confidence come from the status of their parents and the display of their possessions.

Paul had a rich heritage with many things in which he could have taken confidence. And he once did—but that was before he came to know Christ. In Christ, Paul found a new, secure, and worthy sense of confidence.

When I was young my conversations were something like those I hear my middle schoolers having. Back then, Levi’s jeans and Converse tennis shoes ruled the day. To be anybody, you had to wear both. Later in life such things stopped being important to me. I realized that what others think truly does not matter. My confidence began coming from my connection with Christ. We are children of the king, after all, and who could ask for more than that? We need nothing else.

**Father,** may my confidence remain in You alone. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Pressing On as Redeemed Ones

**I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus** (Philippians 3:14).

Scripture: Philippians 3:8b-14

**Song:** “When We All Get to Heaven”

Many successful writers didn't start that way. Most have a pile of rejection letters stashed somewhere—if only in their memories. Some give up after a few rejections. But others persevere. They revise and resend, or they try another publisher. With enough work and persistence, acceptance eventually comes. Then the day arrives when the writer sees his name in print and receives a first paycheck. The sense of joy and rejuvenation that follows makes all the hard work seem worth it.

The apostle Paul was a persistent minister of the gospel. Despite much opposition and persecution, he was determined to spread the gospel to as many as he could in the time God allotted him. Paul had many hardships—beatings, stoning, imprisonment, and shipwreck, just to name a few—and yet he pressed on. Paul knew that one day his hardship would give way to heavenly reward.

As believers we're not immune from life's frustrations, struggles, losses, even tragedies. And when we share the gospel, more people may reject our offer to trust Christ than will accept it. But as redeemed ones, we have been called to press on in Christ. So let's keep going—in life and in His service. Let's not give up! There is the promise of full consolation, rest, and reward when we're finally home in His presence.

**Father,** we ask for Your grace and strength to carry on today. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Free to Love as God Loves

**Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another** (1 John 4:11).

**Scripture:** 1 John 4:7-13

**Song:** “The Old Rugged Cross”

A man pulling a trailer of livestock broadsided John’s vehicle, leaving him in a vegetative state. I visited John monthly at the local health-care facility, and every time I went, one of his family members was present. Although they paid for John to receive care, someone from the family always stayed with him. They knew nurses could not care for him constantly, so *they* did. And for six years John’s family faithfully loved him this way until he went to his eternal home.

One of the signs that identified first-century believers was their love for one another. The apostle John’s encouragement for believers to love each other is rooted in the love God demonstrated to us at the cross.

Love is sacrificial in its service. A few may minister in ways that have a worldwide impact, but most often love’s sacrifices manifest in smaller (yet not insignificant) ways: cooking a meal for an older neighbor, cutting grass for the person who has no mower, tutoring a student who needs a little help, giving to a local charity, volunteering at a food bank, or any such kindness. God gave His best for us, and Jesus said we serve Him by serving others. Some say love makes the world go round, and it certainly makes it a better place to live. But even more significantly, love reveals God’s heart.

**Father,** give us hearts that want to show Your love to others in practical ways. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Free to Love Our Enemies

**“I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”** (Matthew 5:44).

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:43-48

**Song:** “He Looked Beyond My Faults”

Suppose you were a lifeguard and saw a drowning person. If the person was your best friend or even a casual acquaintance, you would not hesitate to help. But suppose the one drowning was a contemptible person—your enemy. Someone who had wronged you, committed an injustice against you, or slandered your name.

Jesus lived out His command to forgive our enemies with some astonishing examples. Just before Judas’s treachery became known to all, Jesus (knowing it already) lovingly washed the traitor’s feet (John 13). At Jesus’ arrest, when Peter lopped off Malchus’s ear, Jesus not only called for an end to the attack but also restored the injured ear (Luke 22). Jesus even asked His Father to forgive the soldiers who were carrying out His crucifixion (23:34).

Loving our enemies—those who dislike us or those who may try to harm us—cannot be accomplished with our own strength. It takes supernatural power, and God gives this through His indwelling Spirit. This love does not necessarily mean we will like our enemies or be their best friend. However, caring for their lives, well-being, and eternal destiny demonstrates that we aren’t selective with our love, as God isn’t. And in this way, others will see Christ’s love revealed through us.

**Father,** help us to live in the freedom and power You provide to love even our enemies, so through us, others may see the extent of Your love. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Redeemed to Live Peaceably

**Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out** (Proverbs 17:14).

**Scripture:** Proverbs 17:13-17

**Song:** “Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It”

On May 6, 1977, an earthen dam in Georgia burst, sending a 30-foot-high mound of water, mud, trees, and other debris over the 186-foot Toccoa Falls and smashing through Toccoa Falls Bible College. The flood killed 39 people, most of them students and their families who lay fast asleep. Searchers found bodies as far as two miles away from the dam, which had been holding back the waters of Barnes Lake. One student reported that a huge wave tore through the second-story window of a men’s dormitory. The flood was the worst the US had seen since a West Virginia dam broke in 1972, killing 125 people.

Wise King Solomon compared starting a quarrel to breaching a dam. Nothing good comes from it. In fact, heartache, anger, fights, broken relationships, loss, and even death can come from arguments that rage out of control.

God calls us to do our best to live peaceably with everyone (Romans 12:18). And while we will have disagreements, a wise gentleman once told me, “There’s always room for common ground if we look for it.” Our personalities, perspectives, and opinions differ widely, but we are all masterpieces created by the master designer. And we can choose peaceful interaction when we let Him—rather than our emotions—guide our attitudes, words, and actions.

**Father,** give us Your wisdom when we’re tempted to quarrel, and show us Your way of peace. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Freed by Grace

**It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery** (Galatians 5:1).

**Scripture:** Galatians 5:1-15

**Song:** “To God Be the Glory”

There’s a bumper sticker that reads, “I owe, I owe, so off to work I go.” I have been working since I turned 14 and started bagging groceries at the local Piggly Wiggly. Actually I started working before then. When I reached 12 years of age, Dad gave me permission to use our mower to cut grass in a few yards in the community. Then there was the early-morning paper route. After graduating high school, I gave up my part-time jobs and began full-time work. And because some bills are never paid off, I expect to keep working until I retire. Even then I’ll need my Social Security benefits.

Paul encountered some who thought they could work for their salvation by undergoing circumcision—the Old Testament rite signifying that a man belonged to the one true God.

If we’re not careful, the work-for-pay mentality that dominates so much of our lives can bleed over into the spiritual realm. But things don’t work that way with salvation. God frees us by His grace through faith. Once we receive our freedom in Christ, we can live as He originally intended: in holiness, in peace with ourselves and others, and with joy. God gives freely what we can’t work for so that we can be what we never could be without Him.

**Father,** thank You for freeing us with Your grace. In Jesus’ name, amen.