

God's Kind Forgiveness

The LORD appeared . . . saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness” (Jeremiah 31:3).

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:1-9

Song: “The Love of God”

“We’re back!” I announced. My sister and I had returned home with ingredients for cookie-making. As a 9-year-old, I’d felt grown-up carrying my mother’s change purse as we walked the three blocks to a small grocery store. And as a reward to myself, I had kept a quarter and a dime. I knew it was wrong, but I decided I’d earned it. Until I admitted my sin, though, I couldn’t look Mother in the eye.

At times, we may act like I did with that stolen change. We know we’ve done wrong and feel miserable about it. Perhaps we try to convince ourselves it was a “small sin.” Or we come up with some other rationalization or excuse to avoid making things right. But regardless of the “size” of the transgression, our willful disobedience gets in the way of our fellowship with God.

There is a remedy for our guilty conscience. In Psalm 32:5, David writes, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.” Then he says that God “forgave the guilt of my sin.” How freeing to be so kindly and readily forgiven!

Father, I want to walk in unhindered fellowship with You. Thank You for this opportunity to confess my sin and for Your kind forgiveness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

June 19–25. **Judy Carlsen** lives in Illinois. She enjoys reading, history, photography, travel, interacting with her three grandchildren, and serving in local ministries.

Willing to Die for Jesus

“I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:27-34

Song: “Who Is on the Lord’s Side?”

Perpetua of North Africa was a young Roman wife, mother, and noblewoman who had become a Christian at the turn of the third century. Because she refused to renounce her faith, she was sentenced to death by Emperor Septimius Severus. The diary Perpetua wrote while in prison testified to her devoted faith. God had indelibly written His truth and ways on her heart.

Initially God wrote His law—the Ten Commandments—on stone tablets for His people to know and obey. But later God spoke through His prophet, pointing to a future time, saying, “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). When the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), His indwelling presence would make known God’s truth and upright ways within each believer’s heart.

Throughout the centuries since then, many Christians have willingly given their lives in devotion to Christ. Their faith has inspired others to follow Jesus, including some who were once enemies of the gospel. As Christ’s followers today, with His law written on our own hearts, let’s also, by His Spirit, be faithful in our witness, loyal all our days.

Father, it’s an honor to follow You. Thank You for writing Your law of truth and love on my heart that I may stand firm in my faith and testimony. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Heaven in Our Hearts

While we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life (2 Corinthians 5:4).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:1-11

Song: “When We All Get to Heaven”

C. S. Lewis wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a series of fictional novels for children, enjoyed by many adults as well. Early in the story, the land of Narnia is under a curse. It lies frozen in a state of “always winter yet never Christmas.” As the story unfolds, a great lion named Aslan, the king of Narnia, gives his life to save the people of his land from destruction. Aslan comes to life again and prevails over his foes, freeing Narnia from endless winter. If you see a parallel to the gospel, you have grasped Lewis’s metaphor.

In today’s passage, the apostle Paul used his own metaphor—that of an old tent—to describe our mortal lives and bodies in this fallen world. As a temporary dwelling, our earthly physical existence will one day be put away for good when Jesus, through His resurrection power, provides us with our new eternal home.

The author of Ecclesiastes wrote, “[God] set eternity in the human heart” (3:11). There is more to life than the here and now. Someday we will dwell with God, living a life of perfect joy!

Father, I long for my eternal home with You. Yet while I’m here, help me to faithfully tell others that they can come to You as well. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God's Work for His Glory

[Jesus] died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:12-21

Song: "Jesus Paid It All"

Civil War veteran Colonel George Clarke and his wife, Sarah, were wealthy. Yet they believed God was calling them to reach Chicago's homeless with the gospel. In 1877, they opened the Pacific Garden Mission. Mr. Clarke was a realtor, not a preacher, and most nights he simply spoke on John 3:16. Sarah prayed fervently for God to minister through George's halting words, and God blessed their efforts. Many came to faith in Christ, and many lives were transformed. Today, nearly 150 years later, Pacific Garden Mission still reaches out for Christ to those who are homeless and hurting.

When God works through us, He is not hampered by our lack or our limitations. Although Moses was reluctant, God worked through him to set His people free. Paul, before his conversion, persecuted the church, but the Lord used him to inspire many Gentile believers.

We may assume that God will only use people with certain talents or perfect backgrounds for work in His kingdom. But Paul wrote, "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). If God has a job for us to do, He will accomplish it through us for His glory.

Father, thank You for Your plan for me. I will trust Your guidance and provision for everything I need as I prayerfully seek to serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

An Undivided Heart

Teach me your way, LORD . . . ; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name (Psalm 86:11).

Scripture: Psalm 86:1-7, 9-16

Song: “Make Me a Blessing”

William Borden (1887–1913) was an heir to his father’s mining fortune. As a teen, however, he dedicated his life to serving God. Meeting missionaries on a trip abroad inspired him to pursue taking the gospel to the most challenging of unreached people groups. In preparation, Borden attended Yale University and then Princeton Seminary. After graduating in 1912, he was ordained at Moody Church in Chicago and then sailed to Egypt for language study. While there, Borden became ill with cerebral meningitis and died on April 9, 1913. His death at age 25 seemed tragic. However, memorial services held in various places around the globe highlighted his focus on following God’s leading and revealed the remarkable impact his gentle and diligent fervor had made for God’s glory on the many lives he touched.

Psalm 86 reveals David’s desire to live wholeheartedly for God. He called on God to help him live a faithful life—to walk steadfastly in God’s ways and bring Him glory.

Having an undivided heart is a worthy pursuit, but we cannot live that way in our own strength. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can live with God as our number-one priority. By His indwelling presence we can daily bring glory to His name.

Father, today I will seek to walk by Your Spirit in the integrity of an undivided heart, to serve You with everything I have. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Face to Face

Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13

Song: “Face to Face”

Meeting a friend of a friend can be a surprise. We may have heard about the person and have some idea of their personality, but it is not the same as a personal encounter. And unless we have seen a photograph, their appearance might be very different than we imagined. In a sense, we may have felt as though we already knew them, but there's nothing like meeting someone face-to-face.

Before trusting Jesus as Savior, we may have pictured God as an angry combatant, bent on destroying us. Or, we may have imagined Him as one who has neither time nor inclination to regard us as He sits on His high and holy throne. Or we may have thought of Him as a disapproving parent, continually shaking His head at our failures.

After coming to know Him as our loving Heavenly Father, still, we cannot yet perceive Him fully. But someday when we go to be with Him, we will see Him face-to-face. He will see each of us and will recognize us as His own. After all, He knew us before we were born; He created each of us and knows us completely (Psalm 139:1-18). What a meeting that will be!

Father, I have an inkling of Your glory, but someday I will see You face-to-face. How I look forward to knowing You fully! In Jesus' name, amen.

Thy Kingdom Come

“The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17).

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20

Song: “Jesus Shall Reign”

Throughout history some rulers have acted as though they were gods. Egyptians worshiped their pharaohs. Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar thought himself worthy of worship. (God rebuked his arrogance by causing him to live like a wild animal for seven years.) Emperors of the Roman Empire required citizens to worship them as gods, and Christians who refused to do so were martyred. In the twentieth century, Japan’s Emperor Hirohito considered himself a god. And European dictators Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin sought godlike status.

However, the God of all eternity ordained when these earthly rulers would live and die, and none was able to achieve dominion over the whole earth. There is only one true God. He created the earth and everything in and around it, and only His plans will prevail.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God set in motion His plan to redeem us. He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus lived a sinless life and died to pay sin’s penalty. Then He rose again and ascended to Heaven. Someday, Jesus will return and reign over all the earth. Every person will bow down to Him, because He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus’ kingdom *will* come!

Father, I look forward to that perfect world when Christ will rule and reign. What joy! Thank You for Your power and love. In Jesus’ name, amen.