

No Fear of God

For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. (Psalm 36:9)

Scripture: Psalm 36:1–9

Song: “I Have Come to the Fountain of Life”

The world changed in 2020. I remember sitting at my daughter’s kitchen table with a borrowed electronic tablet, attempting to keep my grandson’s attention on his teacher talking from the screen. Now he’s back at school, but it’s not the same when I visit. It’s sad to walk down the hall and see the water fountains taped up and turned off to prevent the spread of germs. Gone are the days when children line up together for a cool drink from the fountain; now everyone carries their own water bottle.

David describes the wicked in his day who were missing out on a different sort of fountain, reveling in their sin with “no fear of God before their eyes” (v. 1). They would “commit themselves to a sinful course” and “not reject what is wrong” (v. 4), quite content to satisfy their own thirst rather than “drink from [God’s] river of delights” (v. 8).

Much has changed since David’s day, and much remains the same. But God still offers life everlasting to those who choose “the fountain of life” that never runs dry.

Father, even before I plant my feet on the floor in the morning, remind me You are my true source of life. Everything flows from You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

August 10–16. **Annette Burrell** is a writer, speaker, Bible study teacher, and worship leader. She has adult children and lives in Georgia with her husband and their cat, Patsy.

Called by God's Grace

“The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” And they praised God because of me. (Galatians 1:23–24)

Scripture: Galatians 1:13–24

Song: “My Testimony”

Hiding in the darkened church balcony didn't work. As soon as I sat down, I heard a voice whispering my name. I recognized the face, and we had a short conversation. Then, familiar song lyrics resonated with my heart and penetrated my soul as I felt the Holy Spirit move within me. The singer's testimony caused streams of tears to roll down my cheeks. I knew I was being changed forever. It had been seven years since I had been to church. It would have been easy to slip back into my old way of life, so I volunteered to lead a Bible study. A short time later, someone asked if I had ever read Genesis from beginning to end. It was a challenge I accepted, and when I reached the end of Genesis, I had to keep going.

Paul writes to the Galatians about the change in his life and how he too had to keep going. As soon as he was called by God's grace to preach Christ to the Gentiles, Paul sprang into action. His “immediate response was not to consult any human being” (v. 16) but to follow the stirring God placed in his heart. And because Paul did so, believers even today can praise God because of him.

A whisper brought me out of hiding. A testimony led me to obedience. May we listen and respond to God's call in our lives so we bring glory to God and hope to those around us.

Father, use me—an ordinary person—to help others grow to know You more. I praise You for all You mean to me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

No Confidence in Flesh

And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ. (Philippians 3:9)

Scripture: Philippians 3:3–9

Song: “Amazing Grace”

As much as I looked, I couldn't find it. It was lost, probably never to be found. Long before I laid eyes on it, I had a picture in my mind of a cross necklace—silver, with lines weaving from side to side inside the outline. It was beautiful, and I had all but given up on finding one. Eventually I found myself in England, coming home from a mission trip, and I spotted the most beautiful cross in a jewelry store. It was just like the one I had envisioned in my head, only it also had pearls on it. I snatched it up and wore it every day for years. What took years to find only took a second to lose. And I cried when I realized I would probably never see it again.

In his letter to the Philippian church, Paul looks at loss another way. He puts “no confidence in the flesh” (v. 3) and is glad for all he's lost for the sake of Christ. He calls those things “garbage,” grateful so much more for the opportunity to be found in Christ and to be known by Him.

One day I was packing an overnight bag that I hardly ever used. There was my treasured necklace, found after all these years! This time I cried tears of joy after finding the cross. The closer I get to Christ, the more I picture His joy—maybe even tears—when He finds me perfectly righteous because of my faith in Him.

Father, thank You for finding me. Help me to walk with You daily as I grow in my faith. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

A Stiff-Necked People

“Forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance.” (Exodus 34:9b)

Scripture: Exodus 34:5–9

Song: “The Lord’s Prayer”

My father was a hard man, no hugs or cheek kisses. No words of “I love you” came from his lips. His health began failing at the age of 88, and my sister and I became his chauffeurs, taking him to doctors’ appointments and procedures. During those times I discovered why he was so unloving. “The Bible is only theory,” he said. My father could not show love because he didn’t have the love of God in his heart. I developed compassion for my dad when I understood that. I forgave him for the mental abuse he had put our family through and made it a point to talk more boldly about the one true God.

In today’s passage, Moses describes the Israelites as a stubborn, “stiff-necked” people but asks God—who by contrast he calls “compassionate and gracious,” “slow to anger,” and “abounding in love and faithfulness”—to forgive them and take them as His chosen people (His “inheritance”). History proves how God responded.

When my dad passed away, all his worldly possessions sat in my basement. That was all the inheritance he had to give us. But my husband had led him to the Lord, and that was worth more than anything. May we always remember the grace and mercy God has shown to us and be generous in extending it to others.

Father, thank You for your gift of forgiveness and for answering my prayers. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

A New Creation in Christ

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

Song: “Nothing but the Blood of Jesus”

Years ago, my family went on vacation. On our last day we decided to take advantage of the time we had left and ski for half a day. I stopped at the front desk to check out and asked if we could use the showers in the exercise room when we got back. They said it would be fine. After we returned to the hotel and finished getting cleaned up, I stopped by the front desk to say thanks. Notably surprised, one of the workers spoke up, “Are you the same woman who asked to use our showers?” I tentatively answered, “Yes.” “You don’t even look like the same person! What brand of makeup do you use?”

Makeup can have that effect on us. We use concealers to hide our imperfections, foundation to hide the concealers, then blush and powder to cover the foundation. After its application, we are transformed. But only on the surface.

The only sure and lasting transformation happens when we are reconciled to God through Christ. When we put our trust in Him, our old life is gone and we become what Paul calls “Christ’s ambassadors” (v. 20). He became sin so that we might become “the righteousness of God” (v. 21). And *that* transformation goes far past the surface, seeping into the deepest parts of who we are.

Father, remind me today that I am not who I once was because You transformed—and are transforming—me. Help me to live as Your new creation. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Rejoice in God's Forgiveness

Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart! (Psalm 32:11)

Scripture: Psalm 32

Song: "There Is a Redeemer"

I bought my first "new" car at age 20. The day I was supposed to pick it up, I received a call from the salesman saying that they needed another \$500, or they couldn't go through with the sale. I had already sunk all my savings into that car, so I had to say no. Three calls later, and they were down to needing \$100 from me. But I stood my ground, and the car was sold to me based on the original agreed-upon price.

Aren't we glad God does not bargain with us like that? He never makes a promise only to take it back. He never changes the rules to make us do more or be more or ask more. He is consistently consistent, constantly constant. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Period.

That car was so bright and shiny with not a scratch or blemish on it, inside or out. God sees us that way—blemish free—when we surrender our life to him. We can rejoice in His forgiveness and rest in His unfailing love.

Father, help me to remember joyfully the forgiveness you offer me and to have that same joy in extending forgiveness to others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

God's Chosen Witness

“What shall I do, Lord?” I asked. “Get up,” the Lord said, “and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.” (Acts 22:10)

Scripture: Acts 22:3–15

Song: “Send Me”

I spent more than 30 years working at the same place. What started out as a job turned into a career. I never dreamed when I walked through those doors and sat down behind the desk as a clerk that I would end up in upper management. There were milestones along the way that I chalked up to being in the right place at the right time. But as my relationship with Christ grew, I saw God's plan unfolding. And when it was time to retire, He clearly nudged me into that as well.

Saul, helpless, asked God what he should do. God told him to “Get up . . . and go,” and his journey of following Christ began. Saul had no plan. He was given no explanation or assurance. Yet Paul would go on to become one of history's most influential figures and an enduring example of what God can do with a simple “yes.”

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). When we release perceived control of our lives and simply “get up and go,” we can all be God's chosen witnesses wherever and however He leads.

Father, thank You for sending me. Help me to be willing to say yes and follow You wherever You lead. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.