

Freedom in Jesus

[Jesus said,] “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity”
(Luke 13:12).

Scripture: Luke 13:10-17

Song: “Free at Last”

Micki spent her young adult years drinking, partying, and rejecting Christianity. From her viewpoint, it was the archaic religion of her youth. Then later, as a young mother of two, she accepted an invitation from a friend to attend a mom’s Bible study group. The women there were kind, pointing Micki back to Jesus. Their witness changed her life, as she soon received Christ’s gift of salvation. “God sought me and found me,” Micki said with a smile.

People filled the synagogue where Jesus was teaching one Sabbath. Hidden among the crowd was a woman, bent over and debilitated by her affliction. Jesus noticed her. He called to her and healed her, freeing her from her physical and spiritual bondage. The woman was saved that day because of Christ’s rescuing power.

Even today, Jesus searches for those who are downtrodden and bound by sin. His words, “You are set free,” bring salvation to all who trust Him. Do you remember when Jesus saved you? Perhaps you were trapped in addiction or crippled by bitterness. Maybe you were entangled in fear or drowning in despair. The touch of Jesus both released and repaired you. Reflect on His great love for you. Thank Him for His tender mercy. And, join His quest for reaching the lost.

Father, I’m humbled by Jesus’ gift of grace. Thank You that He found me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God's Sure Promises

[Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to King Nebuchadnezzar,] “Even if [our God] does not [rescue us], we want you to know . . . we will not serve your gods” (Daniel 3:18).

Scripture: Daniel 3:8-18

Song: “Standing on the Promises”

Amy sat across from me in the tiny café, coffee mug in hand. She and her family were preparing to adopt a 2-year-old boy from foster care. Their application was complete, but the biological mother had filed an appeal to the termination of her parental rights. The process was stalled in the court system. “I don’t know what’s going to happen,” Amy said. “But I’m trusting in God’s Word both for me and for my son.”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood resolutely before the king of Babylon. They refused to bow to his god, despite the threat of death. Clinging to their unshakable faith, they asserted that their God was able to save them, yet they would trust Him in any event.

Walking by faith often means living in uncertainty. We aren’t assured of positive medical test results. We aren’t guaranteed financial success. We aren’t given all the answers to our most pressing questions. Instead, we must lean on God’s promises—promises such as “Never will I leave you” (Hebrews 13:5) and “I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand” (Isaiah 41:13). When life’s circumstances pressure, confuse, or upset us—no matter what we’re facing—we can look to God’s promises and stand sure-footed on solid ground.

Father, thank You for the comfort and hope of Your promises. Steady me in Your assurances today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Safe Passage

[King Nebuchadnezzar] said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed” (Daniel 3:25).

Scripture: Daniel 3:19-27

Song: “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”

A 2019–2020 study revealed that 36 percent of students attending Washington, DC, schools reported feeling unsafe as they made their way to school, fearing violence and crime. To combat this problem, the city expanded a program called “Safe Passage.” Along routes to school, workers were placed at key areas, such as subway stations and crosswalks. These adult helpers greeted children and journeyed with them, providing assurance of safety.

King Nebuchadnezzar was astounded to see that the three Hebrew men he’d thrown into the fire were walking around in it, alive and well. The king also saw a fourth person in the fire—believed by many to be the pre-incarnate Son of God. With God protecting them, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emerged unharmed from what should have been certain death.

Living as a Christian can be difficult and sometimes dangerous. Though we may never face a death sentence, we may suffer exclusion, mocking, malicious gossip, misrepresentation, discrimination, or other forms of abuse as we walk out our faith. As believers, however, we are not alone. Jesus is with us through each trial. Similar to school kids journeying with a trusted adult, we are guided and protected by Christ’s presence as His Spirit dwells in us. And as we make our way through life’s perils, we can praise Him daily for another safe passage.

Father, I praise You for Your presence. I know You are with me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God's Authoritative Word

The centurion replied, “Lord, . . . just say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Matthew 8:8).

Scripture: Matthew 8:5-17

Song: “Speak, O Lord”

The adoption petition had been evaluated. Testimony had been heard in the courtroom. The judge gazed on the family sitting before her and authoritatively pronounced, “Having read the petition to adopt and having heard from all parties, the court hereby grants the petition. A decree of adoption shall be entered into the court’s record.” At this declaration, a newly formed family left the courtroom, grateful and happy.

In today’s passage, a Roman centurion came to Jesus in desperate need. His servant was on the brink of death. The centurion’s petition revealed his great faith. He was completely confident that the reach of Jesus’ power did not depend on His physical presence. He knew Jesus had authority to simply speak, and what He commanded would be done. In response to the centurion’s petition, Jesus commended this man’s faith and healed his servant.

A judge’s words are authoritative in the courtroom, but God’s Word is authoritative in all places and at all times. Since the creation of the world, God has spoken to humanity. His words, recorded for us in Scripture, are powerful and active, providing wisdom, hope, and restoration. God’s Word guides and directs our daily living. It is reliable and life-changing, and through prayer, we can ask Him for what we need.

Father, thank You that Your Word is alive, active, and authoritative. I trust it to preside over my greatest needs today as I lift a grateful heart to You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Persistent Requests

[Bartimaeus, who was blind] began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:47).

Scripture: Mark 10:46-52

Song: “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”

Chelsea surveyed the “Wall of Prayer”—a bulletin board in the volunteer room at her church. Notecards covered the top section of the board. Each one held a request for prayer: “Pray for my son’s healing”; “Pray for my friend and me to reconcile”; “Pray for my marriage to be restored”; etc. The board’s bottom section, though, was Chelsea’s favorite. These cards told of answers to prayer. Over the previous year, Chelsea had seen multiple notecards migrate to the bottom of the board—a testament to God’s attentive heart to His children’s cries.

Some people in the crowd surrounding Jesus chastised Bartimaeus as he called out to the Lord. Perhaps their shaming words penetrated Bartimaeus’s heart. He may have been afraid that Jesus would overlook or reject him. But his longing to be healed pushed past all obstacles. He was determined to ask Jesus for what he needed.

No request is too big or too small to bring to the Lord in prayer. No plea is outside His hearing. We can even bring our requests to God in a way similar to the Wall of Prayer at Chelsea’s church, recording them on sticky notes, in journals, or as memos in our phones. As we petition God with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6), we can be certain that He hears us and will lovingly answer, providing what we need in the right way at the right time.

Father, thank You for hearing and answering my prayers. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Responses in a Storm

[Merchants at sea] cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed (Psalm 107:28-29).

Scripture: Psalm 107:23-32

Song: “Till the Storm Passes By”

As I was enjoying a boat excursion in the Bahamas, the Atlantic Ocean went from pristine and tranquil to being roiled in a sudden thunderstorm. I clung to my seat in the tiny fishing boat and prayed my stomach would make it through the boat’s erratic tips and dips. Meanwhile, the captain calmly steered the boat. As the ocean jostled us, I marveled at her poised competence. My anxiety was producing sweaty palms and a pounding heart, yet her serene demeanor never faltered.

The psalmist described sailors on a journey over the sea. Storms brought turbulence. Rough waters disturbed the previously peaceful passageways. The sailors at first reacted fearfully, becoming discouraged in their distress. However, when they looked to God for help, they moved from terror to trust.

Our response to life’s sudden storms will reveal the strength of our faith. When the waters of our circumstances are troubled and we feel out of control, opportunities abound for us to turn to God for help and refuge. As we cry out to Him, we can trust that He will pilot us, bringing us safely to our next destination.

Father, help me to respond to storms by looking to You for help and safe passage. Thank You that Your peace is always available to me, even in turbulent times. In Jesus’ name, amen.

From the Womb

You brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you (Psalm 22:9).

Scripture: Psalm 22:1-11, 19-22

Song: “My Father Planned It All”

A few seconds after Marissa delivered her baby girl, Anaveah, a flurry of doctors surrounded the tiny infant, utilizing all their collective medical skills to help the baby breathe. Marissa fought back tears and prayed for a miracle. Finally, a wail erupted from Anaveah. Marissa cuddled her baby close and praised God.

Psalm 22 opens with a cry of despair from King David. He felt forsaken, insulted, and anguished as his enemies taunted him. Yet, despite their jabs, David boldly proclaimed, “From my mother’s womb, you have been my God” (Psalm 22:10)! God’s presence had surrounded David since birth, and David readily entrusted his life to the Lord.

We can rest in God’s good plan for us. In our mother’s womb, He knit us together (Psalm 139:13). From before our birth, He has known the purpose and calling He has for us (v. 16). Even as we face adversaries, scary situations, and internal struggles, we are not forsaken. God’s presence quiets our hearts and minds. He eases our anxiety. Peace and comfort come to us from Him. Just as doctors worked skillfully and tirelessly to help Anaveah breathe, so God in His wisdom and faithfulness remains with us, working tirelessly in our lives to cause us to thrive spiritually. He never fails. He will fulfill all His plans for us both in the present moment and in the future.

Father, thank You for Your good plans and for the miracle of new life in You. In Jesus’ name, amen.