

August Devotions

Freedom

“I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out Your precepts.” **(Psalm 119:45 NIV)**

Salvation is a gift from God. There is nothing you can do to ‘earn’ salvation because it is freely given. Salvation is freedom from sin. “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” **(Luke 19:10)** Jesus was at the synagogue and read from scripture, “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.” **(Luke 4:18)** Have you ever felt you were like a prisoner? Have you tried to change but you have failed? But God and the death of Jesus on the cross, set the captives free. Jesus “...canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.” **(Colossians 2:14 NLT)** Freedom comes to us when we invite Jesus, the Son of God to be our Savior. He breaks the chains that held us captive. We become free from the entanglement of sin that robbed us from knowing God. “Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man, Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins.” **(Acts 13:38)** So, as a believer you are set free and no longer a prisoner of sin.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for sending Jesus to purchase my freedom. Jesus did what I could not do for myself. Amen

Ephesians 2:8, Colossians 2:15

Transaction vs Transformation

Oftentimes the idea Christians have of “being a Christian” is simply a one-and-done transaction. If they’ve raised their hand, walked the aisle, said the sinner’s prayer - they’re good to go. Easy sailing! This is a very important entry point to a life in Christ, but this is just the transaction portion.

Think of it as buying a house. You sign the papers, but then you need to actually occupy the house and take care of it. You need to move in and take ownership. When you become a Christian, you become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and you need to allow Him to make any revisions that are needed in order to continually maintain and make improvements until what was once simply a house becomes a beautiful mansion fit for a King.

We need to be transformed! A transaction can be verified by how many boxes were correctly checked, but who determines how many boxes are enough? And which boxes are the big ones - which are optional? The objective in salvation is internal - it’s being transformed into the righteousness of Christ, and that can only happen through allowing the Holy Spirit to direct our steps. Jesus died for that to be available to us; we’ve been given a *new life*. That means we should live like we’re not dead! Those who know us best should see a difference in us.

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (**2 Corinthians 5:17** New Living Translation) Don’t waste a minute as a walking corpse; let Him transform you into a living reflection of Him.

Prayer: Thank You, Jesus, for loving us so much that You were willing to give Your life that we might be transformed more and more into Your image.

- **Pray for true transformation, not just transaction:** Lord, help me move beyond surface-level faith. May I daily yield to Your Spirit and invite real, lasting transformation that reflects the character of Christ. - **Romans 12:2**
- **Invite the Holy Spirit to dwell and renovate every part of your life:** Holy Spirit, take full residence in my life. Tear down what doesn’t belong and rebuild me into a dwelling place that glorifies You. - **1 Corinthians 6:19**
- **Live as a new creation with visible fruit of change:** Father, let my daily life reflect the new life You’ve given me. May those closest to me witness Your light shining through us in words, attitudes, and actions. - **2 Corinthians 5:17**

Comfort

“The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” **(Deuteronomy 31:8 NIV)**

We are not alone in our times of struggle, suffering and heart-breaking loss. We do not grieve alone. “The eternal God is your refuge, and His everlasting arms are under you.” **(Deuteronomy 33:27a NLT)** We can look up to God for His guiding hand and the comfort only He can give to us. He will be there when we call upon Him. You may even feel His presence in a very real and tangible way. One time when I was weak, lying in bed, sick, I felt a strong sense of God’s presence in my spirit. Then I heard the words spoken to me, seeming so real, as if hearing a voice saying, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” **(Hebrews 13:5b)** That was a comfort to me and so reassuring that I have never forgotten it. The word of God is our hope in times of trouble. Look what Isaiah the prophet wrote “But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.” **(Isaiah 40:31 NIV)** We can pour out our heart before the Lord. He already knows our circumstances. Let Him know you are trusting Him to be your comforter. Look to the Lord, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” **(Philippians 4:7)**

Psalm 23:4, Psalm 145:18

Weapons of Warfare

We wouldn't dream of going to battle with a sumo wrestler armed with a pea shooter. Neither should we think we can effectively fight spiritual forces with carnal weapons. **(2 Corinthians 10:2.)** We can't outthink darkness - the only way to defeat or overcome it is with light. The enemy often uses manipulation and deceit; God's servants use Truth: His righteousness, standing firm in His words of peace, protected because our faith is in Him, our minds protected with the helmet (assurance) of our salvation, and confidently advancing in the power of His Spirit and His Word which is living and active and sharper than any sword! **(Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 4:12)**

It all hinges on where we believe our strength is birthed and our victory is secured. The enemy will try to defeat us at the onset with his half-truths and twisted words. But when we are alert and prepared with renewed minds, standing firm in His power and might, the battle is already decided, and he knows it. He just doesn't want us to believe it. Take every one of those doubts captive and replace them with His Truth.

"No, despite all these things, *overwhelming victory* is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that *nothing* can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love." **(Romans 8:37-38** New Living Translation, emphasis added) Thank You, Jesus!

Pray for spiritual alertness and discernment in battle: Lord, awaken our spiritual eyes and sharpen our discernment. Help us recognize deception quickly and respond with truth, not fear or fleshly reactions. – **2 Corinthians 10:4**

Pray to be fully equipped with God's armor and the power of His Word: Father, clothe us daily with Your armor—truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, and peace. May Your Word be our sword, and Your Spirit our strength in every battle. – **Ephesians 6:11**

Pray from a place of victory, not defeat: Jesus, thank You that we fight from a place of victory, not fear. Strengthen our minds to reject the enemy's lies and stand firm in the confidence of Your unshakable love. – **Romans 8:37**

The Fullness of Christ Within Us

Scripture: *Ephesians 1:15–23*

Paul’s prayer for the believers in Ephesus is one of the most powerful and hope-filled passages in Scripture. He doesn’t just pray for their needs—he prays that they would *know* God more deeply. And in knowing Him, they would come to understand the richness of what already lives inside them.

Paul asks God to give them “spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God” (v 17). Why? Because when we *see* clearly who God is, we begin to realize who *we* are in Him.

He continues by praying that they would grasp the *immeasurable greatness of God’s power*, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him far above every authority (v 19–21). That resurrection power isn’t distant—it lives in us through the Holy Spirit.

Even more, Paul says the Church (you and me) is *the body of Christ, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way* (v 23). That’s not poetic language—it’s truth. Christ didn’t just save us; He chose to dwell in us. His fullness is our portion, and His Spirit is our strength.

Let this passage shape your perspective today. You are not lacking. Christ is in you—the hope of glory. You carry resurrection power and heavenly authority, not for your own sake, but to live for Him, love like Him, and walk in the fullness of His calling.

Prayer Points:

1. Lord, open the eyes of my heart to truly know You and see who I am in You.
2. Holy Spirit awaken my understanding of the power that lives within me.
3. Father, help me walk in the hope of my calling and the riches of my inheritance in Christ.
4. Jesus, fill every part of my life with Your fullness—let nothing be untouched by Your presence.
5. Teach me to live with boldness, knowing Your resurrection power is at work in and through me.

Sacred, Sanctimonious, or Simply Sloppy

It seems at times that we've lost sight of the true meaning of sacred and what that should mean in our lives. Sacred, by definition, means to be holy and set apart. It not only applies to those things we think of as obvious such as the Bible, but it applies to us as well. **1 Peter 2:9** tells us that we are *chosen* to be a *holy* people, God's instruments to do His work and to speak for Him. We're supposed to be accurately handling His sacred word.

When we don't have a firm grasp on that, the results can be disastrous. We can't be sanctimonious with pious nitpicking and a holier-than-thou attitude. This only offends and can lead to the ruin of those who are the hearers. **(2 Timothy 2:14-16)** On the other hand, being loose with our own interpretations of His sacred word and character will only lead ourselves and others further away from not only godliness but from God Himself.

"As God's obedient children, never again shape your lives by the desires that you followed when you didn't know better. Instead, shape your lives to become like the Holy One who called you. For Scripture says: 'You are to be holy, because I am holy.'" **(1 Peter 1:14-16)**

Prayer: Lord, help us to never settle for self-righteousness or "sloppy agape (love)" in our walk with You. Instead, daily remind us of Your holiness in us and guide us in Your paths of righteousness that we might be beacons of light in a dark world, reflecting Your mercy, grace and love.

A Consuming Fire – Call to Reverence and Response

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’” —

Hebrews 12:28–29 (NIV)

The image of God as a consuming fire invites both reverence and reflection. Fire is beautiful, powerful, and untamable. In the same way, God's presence is not something to be taken lightly or approached casually. He is holy and righteous, and His presence demands our full attention and deepest respect.

God is not distant—He is near and powerful. When we encounter His fire, we are not just warmed; we are changed. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because it brings us into proper alignment with who He truly is. His fire calls for a response—a turning of the heart, a laying down of distractions, and a readiness to be refined.

Prayer Points:

Lord, awaken in me a deeper reverence and awe for Your holiness.

Teach me how to respond rightly to Your presence, yielding all that I am to You.

A Consuming Fire – Holiness and Purity

“But who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner’s fire...” — **Malachi 3:2 (NIV)**

The consuming fire of God does not destroy His people—it purifies them. Like a refiner's fire, His presence burns away the impurities and draws out holiness in us. Holiness isn't about perfection; it's about surrendering every part of our lives to God's refining process.

When we allow the fire of God to search our hearts, we invite Him to remove what is unclean, untrue, and unholy. His fire sanctifies—making us more like Him, not through striving, but through yielding. The more we welcome His cleansing fire, the clearer we reflect His character to the world.

Prayer Points:

Father, refine my heart—burn away everything that hinders my walk with You.

Cleanse me from impure thoughts, motives, and habits. Make me holy as You are holy.

A Consuming Fire – Power and Judgment

“For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” — **Deuteronomy 4:24 (NIV)**

God’s consuming fire is not only refining—it is also righteous and just. His judgment is part of His love. He burns away sin and confronts idolatry because He desires our full devotion. God’s jealousy is not petty—it’s protective. He longs for our hearts and will not share us with the things that destroy us.

This fire exposes sin and warns against compromise. We cannot cling to darkness and walk in His light. Yet even in judgment, His mercy is near. He disciplines those He loves so we may return to Him. His fire calls us to abandon our idols and come fully into His light.

Prayer Points:

Lord, search my heart and expose anything that competes with You.

Help me to walk in truth and not in the fear of man or cultural compromise.

A Consuming Fire – Love and Grace

“Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.” — **Song of Songs 8:6 (NIV)**

The same fire that purifies and judges is fueled by love. God’s love is not a gentle flicker—it is a blazing flame. It burns through barriers and melts hard hearts. It is unrelenting, pursuing us when we stray, and restoring us when we repent.

Grace is the invitation to stand in the fire and not be consumed—because Jesus stood in our place. The cross is the meeting point of justice and mercy, holiness and love. As we receive this consuming love, we are transformed and empowered to love Him back with everything we are.

Prayer Points:

Jesus, thank You for the fire of Your love that never lets me go.

Ignite in me a passionate love for You that consumes every other desire.

Discovering Who You Are by Knowing Whose You Are

We all long to be known, to belong, and to believe that our lives have purpose. In a world driven by performance, comparison, and self-promotion, it's easy to tie our identity to what we do, how we look, or how others perceive us. But our true identity can only be found in knowing who we belong to.

God created us not just to exist, but to live in relationship with Him. He is not a distant deity but a loving Father who desires that we know Him deeply. And to know Him is to know the truth about ourselves—our worth, our purpose, and our place in this world.

However, one of the greatest obstacles to knowing whose we are is often a misunderstanding of who He is. Life's hardships, disappointments, and unanswered questions can cloud our view of God's nature. When things go wrong, we might wonder: Is God really good? Does He care? Can I trust Him?

The psalmist gives us a firm answer in **Psalms 145:8–9 (NLT)** “The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry, and filled with unfailing love. The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all His creation.”

God's character is constant—merciful, compassionate, slow to anger, overflowing with love, and good to everyone. These aren't just hopeful words; they are a divine invitation. When we start with who God is, we gain clarity on who we are. Our identity is not defined by titles or achievements, but by the truth of a good and loving God who formed us and calls us His own.

Let's Reflect: Anchoring Your Identity in God's Character

Describe Yourself:

How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you? Write down several descriptors or identifiers.

Categorize Your List:

Consider where these descriptions come from—are they based on your personality, appearance, performance, relationships, or comparisons?

Read Psalm 145

As you read the full psalm, list every adjective or phrase that describes God's nature and character.

A Psalm of Praise of David.

- ¹ I will exalt you, my God and King, and praise your name forever and ever.
- ² I will praise you every day; yes, I will praise you forever.
- ³ Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! No one can measure his greatness.
- ⁴ Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts; let them proclaim your power.
- ⁵ I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendor and your wonderful miracles.
- ⁶ Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue; I will proclaim your greatness.
- ⁷ Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness; they will sing with joy about your righteousness.
- ⁸ The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
- ⁹ The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.
- ¹⁰ All of your works will thank you, Lord, and your faithful followers will praise you.
- ¹¹ They will speak of the glory of your kingdom; they will give examples of your power.
- ¹² They will tell about your mighty deeds and about the majesty and glory of your reign.
- ¹³ For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations.
- The Lord always keeps his promises; he is gracious in all he does.
- ¹⁴ The Lord helps the fallen and lifts those bent beneath their loads.
- ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you in hope; you give them their food as they need it.
- ¹⁶ When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.
- ¹⁷ The Lord is righteous in everything he does; he is filled with kindness.
- ¹⁸ The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth.
- ¹⁹ He grants the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cries for help and rescues them.
- ²⁰ The Lord protects all those who love him, but he destroys the wicked.
- ²¹ I will praise the Lord, and may everyone on earth bless his holy name forever and ever.

Compare and Ask:

Revisit your original list. Now, through the lens of Psalm 145, ask the Lord to show you how He sees you. Invite Him to replace false identities with truth. Ask, “God, how do You define me?”

Closing Prayer:

Father, help me to know You more so I can know who I truly am. Strip away every lie I’ve believed about myself and replace it with the truth of Your love and goodness. Teach me to see myself through Your eyes—created, cherished, and called. Amen.

God Hears

“But certainly God has heard me: He has attended to the voice of my prayer.” **(Psalm 66:19)**

God knows our heart and He is always listening, and He is always available. “He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” **(Psalm 121:3-4)** God never changes. His word is true. God is our comfort in times of distress. He is our shepherd, and He is leading us as we walk through each day. Lean on Him. Talk to Him. He is a God that answers prayer. Prayer is our lifeline, and God is on the other end. “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.” **(Psalm 103:13-14 NIV)** Never doubt that God hears your prayers. The following verse gives us more encouragement that God hears us. “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” **(1 John 5:14)**

Prayer: Thank you, Heavenly Father, that according to Your word, I can be confident You hear me when I pray. I will pray and know my prayer is heard by You and You will answer me. Amen

Proverbs 3:5, Hebrews 13:8, Psalm 33:4, Psalm 119:76, Psalm 23:1, Psalm 32:8

Thankful for the Thorns

In Arizona we have an abundance of spurweed (also known simply as stickers) and the more desirable but equally spiny bougainvillea. Most of us have probably had painful experiences with at least one of these plants. This is typically what comes to my mind when I read about Paul's thorn in the flesh. However, the Greek word for thorn is actually *skolops* and would more accurately be translated as a pointed piece of wood – a stake!

No wonder Paul prayed for it to be “removed!” And he prayed *passionately* to be delivered. We don't really know exactly what his thorn was, but we do know that it caused him physical pain, mental agony as a messenger from Satan, and a degree of spiritual angst when it wasn't removed. How many of us have been there and wondered why?

His answer was to rest in God's grace and that would be sufficient. We don't really believe His grace is sufficient until we realize that in our own strength, we are insufficient and that His grace is inexhaustible! It's infinite – His love and mercy have no end. And then we come to understand that the thorn is actually a gift when it drives us into closer fellowship with Him.

Prayer: Lord, You know firsthand the agony of thorns, yet You endured as You selflessly gave us a picture of the Father's love and grace poured out on our behalf. Our pains pale in comparison; thank You for anything sent our way that has the end result of greater intimacy with You.