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Freely, Freely

*God forgave my sin in Jesus' name,
I've been born again in Jesus' name,
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His love as He told me to.*

CHORUS:

*He said, "Freely, freely, you have received,
Freely, freely give.*

*Go in my name, and because you believe,
Others will know that I live."*

*All pow'r is giv'n in Jesus' name,
In earth and heav'n in Jesus' name,
And in Jesus' name I come to you
To share His pow'r as He told me to."*

CHORUS:

*He said, "Freely, freely, you have received,
Freely, freely give.*

*Go in my name, and because you believe,
Others will know that I live."*

WORDS: Carol Owens (w. 1972)

MUSIC: Carol Owens (w 1972)

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I Needed Clothes And You
Clothed Me, I Was Sick
And You Looked After Me,
I Was In Prison And You
Came To Visit Me.'

Matthew 25-36

BibleWordings.com

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Good Enough

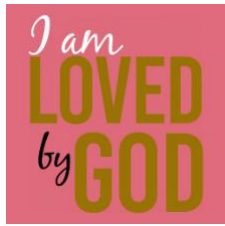
It is amazing how childhood beliefs continue to color our existence even when we think we have mastered them. I had a good family life growing up, but my Dad was one of those who never expressed his love. He was a good provider and took care of us in many ways, but he never said the words, "I love you." His praise was also sparse, but one thing he really liked was when I made good grades. Consequently, I became an over-achiever, striving for good grades throughout school and striving for promotions when I joined the workforce. Having to accomplish all I could became ingrained in me as a way of life to prove that I was "good enough" and worthy of love.

My view of Dad also became my view of God. My family went to church three times a week and I was baptized at an early age. I believed "in" God and Jesus, but I didn't "believe" God and Jesus—that they accepted me as I was. I knew little about the Holy Spirit's work in a believer's life, so I tried to become like Christ on my own. You can imagine how that turned out.

God had His hand on me, though. Through my indiscretions, He protected me. As I learned about the Holy Spirit's work and as I began to study the Word, I was set free from my striving to achieve as a means of validating my self-worth. However, old habits and thought processes are hard to overcome; every now and then, the "not good enough" syndrome would rear its ugly head. I had one such encounter recently.

I was studying King David and the temple he planned to build for God in Jerusalem. His son, Solomon, would do the actual building, but God gave David the plans He had for the temple. It was to be magnificent in scope and design. As I pondered about this temple that would represent God to the Israelites, I recalled that, today, I am the temple of God, as are all believers. I questioned, "Am I magnificent in scope and design?" I certainly didn't

feel good enough to be considered God's temple. Then I heard a whisper—"you are fearfully and wonderfully made." I paused. My body is fearfully and wonderfully made? Then a flood of other scriptures came flowing into my mind showing me that God's temple today is just as magnificent in scope and design as the temple King Solomon built.



The temple: magnificent in scope and design, 1 Chron. 22:5, 2 Chron. 2:5, 9 – *my body: I am fearfully and wonderfully made, Psalm 139.*

The temple: a place for sacrifice, 2 Chron. 7:1, 5, 12 – *I am a living sacrifice, Rom. 12:1*

The temple: God created the design, 1 Chron. 28: 12-19 – *God knit me together in my mother's womb, Psalm 139*

The temple: Represented God's rule and authority, 2 Chron. 6:22-42 – *I have rule and authority over the earth, Gen. 1:28, Psalm 8*

The temple: a place for God's name to reside, 1 Chron. 22:19, 2 Chron. 2:1 – *I am called by the name of God, 2 Chron. 7:14*

The temple: a place to commune with God, 2 Chron. 6:21 – *I can pray to God in the Spirit, Eph. 6:18*

The temple: represented God, 2 Chron. 6:20-21 – *I am Christ's ambassador, 2 Cor. 5:20*

The temple: a Holy place, Hab. 2:20 – *I am to be holy as He is Holy, Lev. 11:44, 1 Pet. 1:16*

The temple: chosen by God, 2 Chron. 7:16 – *I am chosen by God, Eph. 1:4, 2 Th. 2:13*

The temple: filled with the Glory of the Lord, 2 Chron. 5:14 – *I am filled with the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 6:19*

The temple: to be a light for the Gentiles, 2 Chron. 6:32-33 -- *I am to be a light to the world, Matt. 5:14*

The temple: costly, overlaid with gold, 2 Chron. 3:4-10, 2 Chron. 4:19-22 – *I was bought with a price! 1 Cor. 6:20*

In God's eyes, I am a glorious piece of construction that He Himself crafted and designed for specific work in His kingdom. Next time the specter of "not good enough" appears, I will ponder this wonderful revelation that the Spirit gave to me and conclude, "I am good enough." And so are all who don't just believe in God, but who believe Him!

Carolyn Kusler, Coweta, OK



Freedom from Prison

When I was a college student, the state in which I was attending school commuted the death sentence and released all those prisoners into the mainstream prison again. Our Bible class teacher thought it was a good idea for us to write letters to those men, because most had not ever received a letter or encouraging word from outside the prison walls. From the writing of letters, it was just a short step to our teacher suggesting we visit those to whom we had been writing. That is how I ended up corresponding with and visiting a convicted murderer in a state penitentiary.

Whenever I went to visit him, I had to submit to a search of my person and my purse. I was not allowed to take anything inside that could be used as a weapon, so no nail file, clippers, or umbrella on a rainy day. Even though it was a little embarrassing, it was nothing compared to what the prisoner was subjected. If he had made a jailer upset, the search was even worse.

On the weekend, I was permitted, along with others, to visit the prisoner in the grassy yard. There were picnic tables and benches scattered around, and families and girlfriends were allowed to spend time with the prisoners they were visiting.

One thing I noticed, no matter what else was going on, my friend knew where every jailer was. He was also able to hear every conversation going on around us, even though I couldn't hear what they were saying. Those senses for him were very heightened just from trying to stay safe inside those walls.

At the end of the visitation time, I was able to leave the yard and go back to my apartment. He was subjected to another thorough search to make sure nothing had been slipped to him during our visit.

I can't imagine what his days were like inside that prison. He had to constantly be aware of his surroundings, just to make it through a day. He was always on guard and didn't allow himself to trust anybody. Even though he had the death penalty taken away, he still had a very horrible existence.

That experience has helped me to appreciate freedom in many forms. There's the freedom of choice I have, to leave my house when I want, shop when I want, eat when I want, and even go to bed at night when I want. I am so fortunate to have that personal freedom in my everyday life.



On a deeper level, I appreciate my freedom through Christ from the prison of sin. I no longer have to listen to Satan as he tries to dictate my moves. Jesus released me from those chains long ago, and I am so grateful for the blessings I find in belonging to my Lord. He guides me through my days by putting opportunities before me and placing certain people in my life, but His guidance comes from His love for me.

I also have the freedom of hope. For those in the prison of darkness and sin, there is no hope. When I was baptized, I received the gift of the Holy Spirit. I like the analogy of the Spirit being like an engagement ring. It shows the world that I have been promised to someone. It reminds me that as a Christian, I am part of the bride of Christ and He will one day come back to claim me (and all His faithful ones) for Himself.



A minister friend of mine conducts regular services at a prison. He says the song most requested by the inmates is: "Like a bird from prison bars has flown, I'll fly away." They desire that freedom – I have found it.

Lorna Smith, Lubbock, Texas

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ESCAPE!

Everyone dreams of escaping...

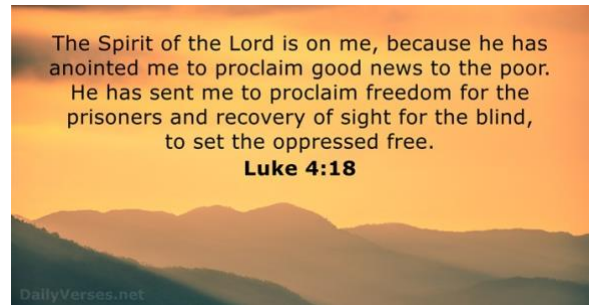
Something...

Sometime...

During a dark period of our country's history, black people were in slavery. Their spiritual songs often told of their dreams of escaping slavery. The best example of their dreams for equality was expressed by Martin Luther King, Jr. in his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

Some people dream of escaping responsibility and living a carefree life with plenty of money and time to indulge every whim, while others simply want to escape poverty. Some who dream of escaping the harsh realities of life fall into a life of alcohol or drug abuse. Some dream of escaping the day-to-day monotony of their routines and just want a vacation. Just about any place will do, but some exotic, romantic Caribbean island sounds good. Even a weekend camping trip will liven up their lives.

Others feel trapped in dead-end jobs and dream of escaping to some wonderfully exciting, challenging career. Teens often want to escape the authority of teachers and parents—what do they know anyway, they reason in their young hearts. Meanwhile, the elderly often want to escape loneliness and physical pain—to be young and free again, or at least to slip the bonds of this life and take that journey to heaven.



Several years ago, a Christian man from our area, paralyzed from the neck down, was in our local hospital. One Sunday afternoon, my husband and I took communion to the shut-ins, and this man was on our list. After my husband offered the prayer for the bread, he had to physically place it on this gentleman's tongue. Likewise, he had to place the cup to the man's mouth and help him to partake of the fruit of the vine.

Once the communion service was over, the man looked at me and asked me to please scratch his nose for him. He was trapped in a body that could not obey even the simplest need to scratch his own nose. Since then, every time we sing, "I'll Fly Away," especially the verse that says, "Like a bird from prison bars has flown," I think of

that man and mentally picture him “flying away” from the body that imprisoned him.

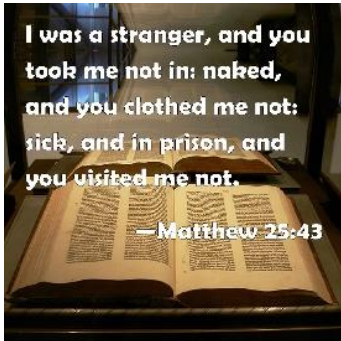
The Bible is full of examples of escapes. Noah and his family escaped the destruction of the world by the flood. Moses and the children of Israel escaped slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea. The spies in Joshua 2 escaped certain death with the help of Rahab, the prostitute. David fled from Saul many times, and Elijah fled from wicked Jezebel. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego escaped the fiery furnace unharmed, and Daniel escaped unscathed from the lions’ den. In the New Testament, young Jesus’ family escaped Herod’s death decree for all Jewish boys age two and under. Paul escaped the murderous Jews in Damascus when faithful men let him down over the wall in a basket (Acts 9:25).

Escape is a part of life, but there is one thing that cannot be escaped. Twice in the New Testament, we are told that **all** must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Romans 14:11 says, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me and every tongue shall confess to God,” and Revelation 20:12 tells of John’s vision of Judgment Day where “all the dead, small and great were standing before God, and books were opened.” He goes on to say, “...the dead were judged according to their works by the things which were written in the books.” Also, “anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Clever as we might be, we will not escape the Day of Judgment. We will not be able to hide from it. The smoothest talking politician will not be able to talk his way past it. The most powerful person ever to live on this earth will appear before God on that day.

However, there are some things we can escape.

Temptation: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will



not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Temptations hold powerful sway over us, but God has promised us that we will be able to escape those temptations—if we take the escape route.

Condemnation: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do

not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” Eternal condemnation is reserved for only those who reject God and refuse to obey His will and walk according to the Spirit. The choice is ours to make. If on Judgment Day we find ourselves condemned, it will have been our own choices that brought us to that point.

Spiritual death: “Death is swallowed up in victory...” (1 Cor. 15:54b). This scripture is often quoted at funerals and burial services. For those mourning the loss of faithful Christians, it takes away some of the sting out of that loss, for they realize that their loved one has overcome death and has gone on to his/her reward.

Therefore...

Considering all that God has done for us, we have such a fabulous eternity to anticipate. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 15:58 to “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” In Colossians 3:1-2, he tells us to “set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

Jesus himself cautioned us in Matthew 6:19-21, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Are you dreaming of escape? Obeying God is the greatest escape of all.

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, MO

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