

## God's Redeeming Love for the Wayward

Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south (Psalm 107:2-3).

**Scripture:** Psalm 107:1-9

**Song:** “Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus”

My wife, Renée, never knew her grandfathers, but did know two step-grandfathers who rejected the gospel for years. One had a circuit preacher for a dad, but the son wanted nothing to do with God, church, or the Bible (even though he still could quote Psalm 23 and other Scriptures into old age). On his deathbed, Grandpa read a final evangelistic letter from Renée and trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior—just two days before his passing.

Renée's other step-grandfather even more adamantly rejected Jesus Christ. When he died, we told our children not to assume he went to Hell. Instead, we asked them to pray that God would give us some indication if Grandpa's heart had changed. A few days later a Christian step-grandson (whom Renée had never met) said that he had led Grandpa to Christ the day before he died.

How good, how very good, that no matter what, God never gives up His redeeming love for the wayward!

**Father,** thank You for Your desire that none perish but that all come to repentance. We see this throughout the Bible. I praise You for Your redeeming love! In Jesus' name, amen.

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October 11–17. **David Sanford** lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife of 39 years. He loves to collect rocks and sea glass on the West Coast's most picturesque beaches.

## God's Redeeming Love for the Rebellious

**Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities** (Psalm 107:17).

**Scripture:** Psalm 107:10-22

**Song:** "Jesus Whispers Peace"

When I ask others how they came to faith, some look down and say, "My testimony is pretty boring. I grew up in a loving Christian family."

I slap the table hard for emphasis. "I wish I had such a great testimony! You have no idea what the alternatives are."

My atheistic father's lectures were always the same: "David, there are no rules. Don't obey anyone. Don't even obey me." Pretty crazy, huh? Yes, I got hurt. Worse, I hurt others. Still worse, two of my siblings were terribly hurt.

By age 13, I didn't need anyone to teach me that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). What I needed was a Lord and Savior who created me, loved me, died for my sins, rose again, and asked me to follow Him wholeheartedly for the rest of my life. I said "Yes!" And I've kept saying yes ever since.

The whole trajectory of my life changed thanks to God's redeeming love that reached even me.

**Father,** thank You that You aren't disillusioned with the foolish and rebellious. You never had any illusions to begin with. Thank You for Your redeeming love in my own heart and life. I praise You for saving me! In Jesus' name, amen.

## God's Redeeming Love for the Storm-Tossed

**[God] spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves** (Psalm 107:25).

**Scripture:** Psalm 107:23-32

**Song:** "He Hideth My Soul"

When I was a boy, a monstrous earthquake hit Alaska. It registered 9.2 on the Richter scale. The ocean vanished around many of the islands off the southern and southwestern coast of Alaska. Shipwrecks, rusting commercial crab traps, and sea anemones lay exposed to the sky. Then terrifying tsunami waves 30, 60, and in some cases well over 100 feet high slammed into the islands, causing untold misery and grief.

A few months later, while playing on a gorgeous but isolated beach on the east end of Kodiak Island, I found a strange, round metal object. More than a dozen metal rods protruded from the sphere. I pushed again and again until I got it rolling nonstop down the beach. Then I heard loud shouts. My parents rushed up and scolded me in a way that I'd never been reprimanded before. In no uncertain terms, I was told never to touch such objects again. I had been playing with an old sea mine that could have ripped me apart.

Thanks to God's redeeming love, I lived long enough to hear the life-transforming gospel of Jesus Christ and say "Yes!" And for that, God gets all the honor, glory, and praise.

**Father,** thank You for sparing our lives and pointing us to Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, my Savior. Your redeeming love is written over the whole course of my life and eternity. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Praise God for Graciously Adopting Us

**In love [the Father] predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in [Jesus, whom] he loves (Ephesians 1:4-6).**

**Scripture:** Ephesians 1:3-14

**Song:** “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

When we adopted our youngest daughter, Anna, we promised she would be part of our family forever. The first few months she was with us, we had to repeat that promise frequently. Why? Because of the terrible wounds in her heart, Anna couldn't believe us—but it was still true and continues so to this day.

There was nothing Anna could do to get into our family. Instead, Renée and I made a solemn promise. That promise was blessed by God, recognized by the governing authorities, and celebrated by our extended family, church, and broader community of friends and neighbors.

In Scripture we find four types of promises God makes by His grace. Each type or group of promises is relational in nature. This is true of people before Abraham (Genesis 1–11), of Abraham and his descendants (the Jewish people), of Gentiles (non-Jewish peoples), and of the church (all God's people united as one). Ultimately, the promises all have to do with bringing people into God's family as adopted “children of the promise.”

**Father,** I praise You for graciously adopting me as one of your children of the promise. What a joy to know that You have welcomed people from every nation on earth to be part of Your family now and forever. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Praise God for Graciously Saving Us

**By grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

**Scripture:** Ephesians 2:1-10

**Song:** “Saved by Grace”

One Sunday morning I had the privilege of interviewing more than a dozen third to sixth graders. Each child sat on a “hot seat” and answered five questions. The first four answers were easy: name, grade, number of siblings, and how many years they had gone to church.

The final question was a little tougher: “Talk about when it is hard for you to trust God.” I was amazed at their responses. First, they had a much shorter list of reasons than adults usually do. Second, several of the children honestly and sincerely told me, “It’s always been easy for me to trust God.” You should have seen the smiles on their faces.

It doesn’t matter where I travel. When I meet someone who trusts God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, and what’s been called “the core of orthodoxy” (the gospel), I get a big smile. And I smile big because I’ve just met a brother or sister in Christ. These conversations brighten my steps the rest of the day—not because of anything we did, but because God graciously saved us.

**Father,** thanks for Your wonderful gift of salvation by grace through faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ. He died for us and for our sins, was buried, and rose again from the dead on the third day. What a Savior! In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Praise God for Graciously Uniting Us

**You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone** (Ephesians 2:19-20).

**Scripture:** Ephesians 2:11-22

**Song:** “Wonderful Peace”

After cervical spine surgery to repair my badly damaged C3–C5 vertebrae, I had a terribly thick scar on my neck. I couldn’t hide it, so I got over the embarrassment and went on with my life. A few months later I was sitting outside a coffeehouse. When I finished a leisurely phone call with Renée, I glanced around and noticed a distinguished businessman sitting near me.

The businessman walked over, so I offered him a seat at the table where I was sitting. He said he felt compelled to tell me his story because of my scar. He assumed it meant that I had tried to commit suicide. In other words, I was someone he trusted because he apparently believed I had experienced deep pain, severe depression, and utter despair. He kept talking, so I never had a chance to correct his misconception. Then again, perhaps that was providential so I could hear him out and then share the rock-solid hope I have in Jesus Christ.

The Lord will use anything, anything, to bring “foreigners and strangers” (Ephesians 2:19) into His family forever. He doesn’t want anyone to perish. Instead, He wants everyone to come to repentance.

**Father,** thank You for Your amazing mercy and grace to offer forgiveness, salvation, hope, and eternal life to whoever will accept You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## God's Redeeming Love Makes the Difference

**Let the one who is wise . . . ponder the loving deeds of the LORD** (Psalm 107:43).

**Scripture:** Psalm 107:33-43

**Song:** "He's Everything to Me"

Billy Graham. What a life. What a legacy. Yet Graham made it clear in the early 1980s that his ministry could be over in a moment if he were to take any glory for himself. He knew that God could withdraw His guiding hand and the ministry would end. It's a sobering thought that the Lord could nullify what any individual does best. It's encouraging, however, to reflect on God's faithfulness in and through Billy Graham for eight decades.

Finishing this life with a God-honoring legacy isn't automatic and certainly isn't easy. So when I was in my 20s and 30s, I asked a number of older Christians to show me how it's done. Thankfully, they agreed. And even better was seeing the joy on their faces toward the end of their lives. They taught me these things:

Faithfully serve God your whole life.

Keep your heart open to God-encounters.

Daily stay dedicated and disciplined.

Remain committed to lifelong learning.

Actively seek multiple mentors for life.

**Father**, thank You for Your redeeming love. I want to stay faithful to You and leave a loving, grace-filled legacy that brings You honor, glory, and praise. In Jesus' name, amen.