

By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is President of the American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions.

Forgiven and Free

With Lent just around the corner I am reminded of my own formation and conversion in Christ Jesus. With transformation must come witness, and so it is in my witness that I pray others may come to know that same freedom that I found through the forgiveness of, and faith in, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalm 32 was one of the first to affirm for me that God listens to and answers prayer. The Psalmist expressed my own nightly wrestling with the guilt of my sins. *Then I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not hide my iniquity; I said 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin (5).*

What incredible relief I received through that forgiveness! The night God proclaimed me forgiven, the night he called me his beloved daughter, were sweet words to this sin-ridden soul. They were sweet sweet words to the one who did not grow up with a father, to hear words affirming her as “Beloved Daughter” by her Father God. That event set in motion actions which were to further set me free from my burdens.

My new-found faith in God gave me courage and strength. It was as if the words written to Timothy so long ago were aimed directly at me: *But as for you...pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.* (1 Timothy 6:11-12)

God gave me good people to encourage me, support me, and hold me up when I felt I could not longer stand. God sustained me when I felt I could no longer *breathe*. Even when I felt I could no longer bear the emotional pain, God carried me through to the other side and delivered me to this place of wholeness and rest and peace of place. God gave me a purpose-driven life by empowering me to step into opportunity and discover and cherish the unique gifts I have been given.

Psalm 32:1-2

¹ Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
² Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count
against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.

By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is President of the American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions.

Forgiven and Free

With Lent just around the corner I am reminded of my own formation and conversion in Christ Jesus. With transformation must come witness, and so it is in my witness that I pray others may come to know that same freedom that I found through the forgiveness of, and faith in, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalm 32 was one of the first to affirm for me that God listens to and answers prayer. The Psalmist expressed my own nightly wrestling with the guilt of my sins. *Then I acknowledged my sin to you and I did not hide my iniquity; I said 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin (5).*

What incredible relief I received through that forgiveness! The night God proclaimed me forgiven, the night he called me his beloved daughter, were sweet words to this sin-ridden soul. They were sweet sweet words to the one who did not grow up with a father, to hear words affirming her as “Beloved Daughter” by her Father God. That event set in motion actions which were to further set me free from my burdens.

My new-found faith in God gave me courage and strength. It was as if the words written to Timothy so long ago were aimed directly at me: *But as for you...pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.* (1 Timothy 6:11-12)

God gave me good people to encourage me, support me, and hold me up when I felt I could not longer stand. God sustained me when I felt I could no longer *breathe*. Even when I felt I could no longer bear the emotional pain, God carried me through to the other side and delivered me to this place of wholeness and rest and peace of place. God gave me a purpose-driven life by empowering me to step into opportunity and discover and cherish the unique gifts I have been given.

Psalm 32:1-2

¹ Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
² Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count
against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.



You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance! (7) There is hope and peace and light through God's comforting and willful presence. And the Psalmist assures me of God's continuing guidance: *I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you;* (8) and I see and know that this is true. He advises me not to *be like a horse or mule that must be curbed with bit and bridle* (9) or else his words will not be fulfilled in me. It is with a humble heart that I endeavor to be true to God's will and purpose for me, regardless of the heartache and difficulties set before me.

The Psalmist leaves me with a warning: *Many are the torments of the wicked* (10) but also the assurance that *steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.* (10). The wicked do not always repent of their wickedness, or even seem to know that their actions are wicked. I do, however, believe that their souls are inwardly and even unknowingly tormented; being ignorant of the fact that another way, God's way, the forgiven way, even exists.

And so I must witness to the change that God has made in my life. Perhaps one who is tormented will hear and seek out the healing balm of God's forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Perhaps in desperation, as did the father whose son was seized by a convulsive spirit, he/she might approach the throne of grace: "Lord if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and save us!" And hear Jesus reply, "IF you are able! - All things are possible for the one who believes." And as the father did, may they cry out, "I believe, Lord help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:22-24) And his child was healed. He sought out Jesus because he had no where else to turn. And he sought him out because he had *heard* about him.

And so, even if all around you rages on, you may yet know the stillness and peace that God in Christ Jesus may provide. I read somewhere that: *Sometimes God calms the storm, and sometimes he lets the storms rage and he calms the child.* May it be so for you who hear God's word and *believe*.

And so the case for witnessing is made, as the Apostle Paul made it: *But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.* (Romans 10:14-17). Amen



You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance! (7) There is hope and peace and light through God's comforting and willful presence. And the Psalmist assures me of God's continuing guidance: *I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you;* (8) and I see and know that this is true. He advises me not to *be like a horse or mule that must be curbed with bit and bridle* (9) or else his words will not be fulfilled in me. It is with a humble heart that I endeavor to be true to God's will and purpose for me, regardless of the heartache and difficulties set before me.

The Psalmist leaves me with a warning: *Many are the torments of the wicked* (10) but also the assurance that *steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.* (10). The wicked do not always repent of their wickedness, or even seem to know that their actions are wicked. I do, however, believe that their souls are inwardly and even unknowingly tormented; being ignorant of the fact that another way, God's way, the forgiven way, even exists.

And so I must witness to the change that God has made in my life. Perhaps one who is tormented will hear and seek out the healing balm of God's forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Perhaps in desperation, as did the father whose son was seized by a convulsive spirit, he/she might approach the throne of grace: "Lord if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and save us!" And hear Jesus reply, "IF you are able! - All things are possible for the one who believes." And as the father did, may they cry out, "I believe, Lord help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:22-24) And his child was healed. He sought out Jesus because he had no where else to turn. And he sought him out because he had *heard* about him.

And so, even if all around you rages on, you may yet know the stillness and peace that God in Christ Jesus may provide. I read somewhere that: *Sometimes God calms the storm, and sometimes he lets the storms rage and he calms the child.* May it be so for you who hear God's word and *believe*.

And so the case for witnessing is made, as the Apostle Paul made it: *But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.* (Romans 10:14-17). Amen