

Discover God's Strength to Live

Have you read or watched *Amazing Grace*? It is the story of William Wilberforce's efforts to abolish slavery. His efforts to make slavery illegal failed in the courts repeatedly. Finally, he tricks some of the upper class into taking a pleasant boat ride—right past the slave ships. The conditions on those ships are so appalling (it makes me gag to even think of it) that these fine people are nauseated by the smell of human filth and waste.

Slavery has a certain smell about it.

And what I smell is the enslavement that comes when we try to live in our own strength. So yesterday's blog post was about our need to recognize we are powerless and to lean heavily and completely on the force of God to transform our lives.

For six hours, it was write-delete-write-delete-write-delete-write-delete. My heart cried out, "What can I say to them, Lord? How can I phrase this so they'll know to stop working so hard in their own strength? What words will convince them to cry out their powerlessness to You?"

Paul says, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6, NIV).

Paul instructs, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him" (Col. 2:6).

We received Christ when we were powerless, and we continue to be powerless. Paul also says, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7). The power is from God and not from us.

I weary of these two words that come from the mouths of Christ followers: *I'm trying*. Trying not to be afraid. Trying to stop

eating so much. Trying to forgive. In this phrase is personal effort. Personal strength. Personal will to change. It is the mantra of relying on self to transform self.

It would be good to hear, instead, “By the power of Christ, I will not be afraid. By the power of Christ, I will eat less. By the power of Christ, I will forgive.”

Let me hear, “I cannot, but Christ can.” Let’s make this the new mantra of the redeemed: “The power is from God and not from us.”

I’ve tried it. I’ve said to the Lord, “I cannot continue, I cannot love her, I cannot forgive him, I cannot control my tongue (definitely cannot!).” And in the power of Christ, I have continued, have loved, have forgiven, have shut up.

Powerlessness is like the key that hangs outside of Otis’ jail cell in Mayberry. It is right within arm’s reach—just grab it and be free.

Be free of yourself.

And when you are free from living in your own strength, you will not believe the joy that will bring me. You’ll tell me your stories, maybe? Stories of living in the power of Christ?

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