

You Have All the Power You Need

God's grace is truly amazing! As believers, we're saved by His grace—God's undeserved favor—and we live by His grace, which is also God's power in our lives to do what we could never do in our own strength. And it's all because God loves us unconditionally, constantly and completely.

But even though God loves us, we still have a problem: sin. It's important for us to learn how to confront sin and overcome it, because while God loves sinners, He hates sin. He detests it because of what it does to us and how it keeps us from the abundant life that Jesus died to give us (see John 10:10).

Tragically, many people live in an endless cycle of sinning, feeling guilty and condemned for what they've done, suffering under guilt and condemnation for a while, and then eventually believing God will forgive them or that they've paid for it enough to be forgiven. I know how miserable it can be to live this way because I've been there myself. And it isn't God's plan for our lives.

Jesus paid a tremendous price for us so we could have abundant life. And one of the greatest things about life in Christ is it makes us dead to sin. Romans 6:11 says, "Consider yourselves also dead to sin and your relation to it broken, but alive to God [living in unbroken fellowship with Him] in Christ Jesus" (AMP).

We Have the Power to Overcome

You may be thinking, "Joyce, if I'm dead to sin, then why am I still sinning?" The Bible says we are dead to sin but that sin is not dead. We consider ourselves dead to sin because when we're born again through Christ, our spirit is alive in Him

and wants nothing to do with sin. That's why it bothers you when you do something wrong.

However, our souls—made up of the mind, will and emotions—are not immediately mature in the things of God. We need to go through a lifelong process of learning how to renew our minds with God's Word, submit our will to Him and be led by the Holy Spirit rather than our emotions. In Christ, we have God's grace to overcome sin, but we have to choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to walk it out.

As a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), the Holy Spirit lives in your spirit, and you have His power to do God's will. This means you don't have to live with anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, depression, addiction, self-pity, selfishness or anything else that isn't Christlike. The Amplified Bible's version of Philippians 4:13 says we have strength for all things in Christ, we're ready for anything, and we are self-sufficient in His sufficiency. In other words, we can do whatever we need to do, according to God's will, by the strength and ability we have in Christ!

It's All About Your "Want To"

We clearly see in God's Word that anything He tells us to do, He will give us the ability to do it. But do we really believe it? Do we *want* to believe it? It's easier to come up with excuses for why we can't do things that are hard or that we really don't want to do: "I just can't help it," "It's too hard," "I'm addicted," "It's the way I was raised."

Do you know that an excuse is a reason stuffed with a lie? And God is not a liar. So when you're tempted to make an excuse (and we're all tempted sometimes), think about this: Why would God tell us to do something without giving us the ability to do it by His grace? Why would He say we should be kind, patient and merciful—that we should live lives of helping others—and then not help us do it?

The best thing we can do is stop making excuses and decide that if God said it, it's true. He will give us the ability to do what He's asking us to do by His grace. It really comes down to whether we want to believe Him and make the effort to do, by faith, what He wants us to do.

I know this is a challenging message, but I'm sharing it with you because God loves you so much, and He wants you to have a good life. His plans for you are better than you could ever imagine for yourself, and He wants you to be hopeful about your future. In Christ, we don't ever have to settle for mediocre lives filled with compromise. We can have God's best because we are dead to sin and alive in Him!

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