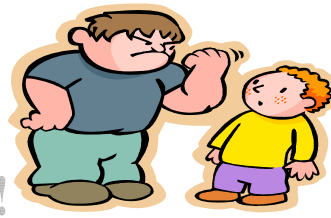


Don't Let those Bullies Get You Down!



2 Corinthians 4

Remember the class bully when you were in grade school? He loved to intimidate those smaller and weaker. He was nothing but a 5-foot, 120-pound heap of trouble who loved to scare everyone silly. *Especially the little girls!* Well, you're over that situation by now, but trouble is still around. *In this life there is trouble.....* Like the giants we have spoken about in the past. *Trouble with every opportunity the devil gets.* The Apostle Paul said he was troubled by circumstances on every side...but on the inside he was not in despair nor destroyed.

2 Cor 4:8-9 We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed –

1. Paul fixed his attention, not on external circumstances, but on the light of the gospel in his inner man, because that's where the Excellency of God's power is. Knowing the truth will always make us free. **John 8:32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**
2. "We're perplexed," he said. The Greek word for *perplexed* means "to be cornered by the circumstances." "But not in despair." In other words, even when it looks like there's no way out, I can find a way out if I look to the Word that is living inside of me. *That even includes active addiction. There is a way out!*
3. "Persecuted, but not forsaken." If I'm persecuted on the outside, how do I know God hasn't forsaken me? Because when I look on the inside, I can hear Him saying, "I will never leave you nor forsake you, even to the ends of the earth."
4. *Hard pressed...Not Crushed...* When outward circumstances become unbearable and your human resources are exhausted, God's resources are given to expand your faith, hope and strength. *Under no circumstances will God forsake his faithful children.*
5. *Hard Pressed, Perplexed, Persecuted and Struck Down.* The Bible is the story of these people and we today walk in many of their shoes. But, the Bible is also the story of broken people who were mended, lost people who were found, proud people who were shattered and hurting people who were healed.

Heb 13:5-6 For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

1. *Hard Pressed...Perplexed...Persecuted...Struck Down.* There's no doubt about it, Paul was under more pressure than most of us today will ever experience. But, he handled it...and so can you if you'll do the following.
 - a. When pressure is coming from ___ **The Outside** ___ Remember where your life force comes from ___ **The Inside!**
 - b. *Stop running on a spiritual deficit.* Take time to feed your inner man with the **Word of God.** Feast your spirit on the Word so that your inner man can daily grow mightier and more equipped to fight that good fight.
 - c. Focus on Jesus inside you until your inner picture of Him is bigger than the outside situations you're facing with that measly 5-foot, 120-pound heap of trouble that continuously seems to scare you silly.
2. If you'll build up your spirit man in those 3- ways, when pressure comes, it won't affect you like it may have done in the past. Soon, the problems that were knocking you flat won't bother you to the extreme it previously had. Or: At least with the spirit of God living inside you'll be able to maintain and recognize your bully a whole lot sooner.
3. *Never forget:* One of the most spiritually dangerous things we can do mentally is to passively entertain the bullies of deceptive thinking that often comes to mind. "With *Jesus on the Inside*" we can be prepared to take action and face them head-on together and with God confidence.

Col 3:8-11 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

1. Salvation ensures us that we are forgiven and alive in Christ, *but God isn't finished with us yet.*
2. We have now "laid aside the old self with its negative and evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created us."
3. Instead of running from the bullies, being hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted or struck down we must operate in the full power of what we have been given.... *Holy Spirit Power!*

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Oh, God, I need more power! I need more strength to get through this day clean and sober. Oh, God, that 5-foot 120-pound bully is scaring me! These using urges and the temptations are scaring me! I'm hard pressed Lord and I have the desire to pick back up and I don't know if I have the power to get through this day without using. "Please...please...please give me more power, Lord!" (Have you ever cried out to God like this?)

Acts 2:1-4 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. Jesus promised the disciples that after He left, the Holy Spirit would bring them power. *Holy Spirit Power!* Little did the disciples know just what kind of "Power" but they learned first hand. The Holy Spirit and his power are as real for us today as they were on the Day of Pentecost. .
2. *The point is clearly written.* As born-again, Holy Spirit –filled believers, we don't need more power. We simply need to more fully release what we've already been given. We need to allow the Spirit of God within us to flow through us in greater measure.
3. The Holy Spirit was given to empower us to live as God wants us to live. *Especially Clean and Sober.* By faith, we can receive the Holy Spirit's presence and power within us, enabling us in the recovery process and in spiritual growth as we daily walk with the Lord.
4. *If we're not seeing the miracle of sobriety in our lives, it isn't God's fault. He isn't the one limiting us. We Are!* "We Are" the one who is keeping the lid on the power of God in our lives and "We Are" the one who can take that lid off. God "Is Not" holding back anything that will set us free from active addiction and assure us total overcoming victory in life and in recovery.

John 14:15-18 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever -- 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

1. Maybe you ask yourself, "Well then, why hasn't He helped me before now?" "Heaven knows I've needed it and have felt orphaned most of my life" you say. **Answer Is:** He's been waiting for you to give him something to work with. He's been waiting there inside you, waiting for you to believe in and speak the Word of God in faith.
2. Daily remember, He's your *Helper*, not your dominator. So you have to decide right now to start opening that door and develop an awareness of the reality of the Holy Spirit within you.
3. Stop spending all your time meditating on that 5-foot, 120-pound bully you're facing and start spending it meditating on the power of the One inside you. *Release the muscle of God to work for you!*

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Speak The Word

I have received the Holy Spirit, therefore I have received Power! Acts 1:8

1. The Holy Spirit and His power are real. When we compare Peter in the gospels with Peter in the book of Acts, we see that his life was dramatically changed. When we look at Paul doing his utmost to destroy the early church and then see his dedicated missionary service, we can tell that he was radically transformed by God.
2. The power of God changed their hearts and gave them confidence to speak truth. In our powerlessness, God makes His power available to us through the Holy Spirit. With His help, no problem is too great to overcome and there is no life so far gone that it cannot be made new.
3. As we commit our life to God and to recovery, we can expect to face those bullies of life and numerous other obstacles, but we can also expect to overcome any problems or opposing forces with *Holy Spirit Power!*



Remember your bully? If you have *Holy Spirit Power* he shouldn't even make you blink today, now that you're born again and in God stand well over 6-foot tall. What happened? What changed? In faith you grew stronger! *That's what happened to both Peter and Paul.* Keep feeding on the Word until the image of Jesus within you grows bigger than those intimidating bullies around you.