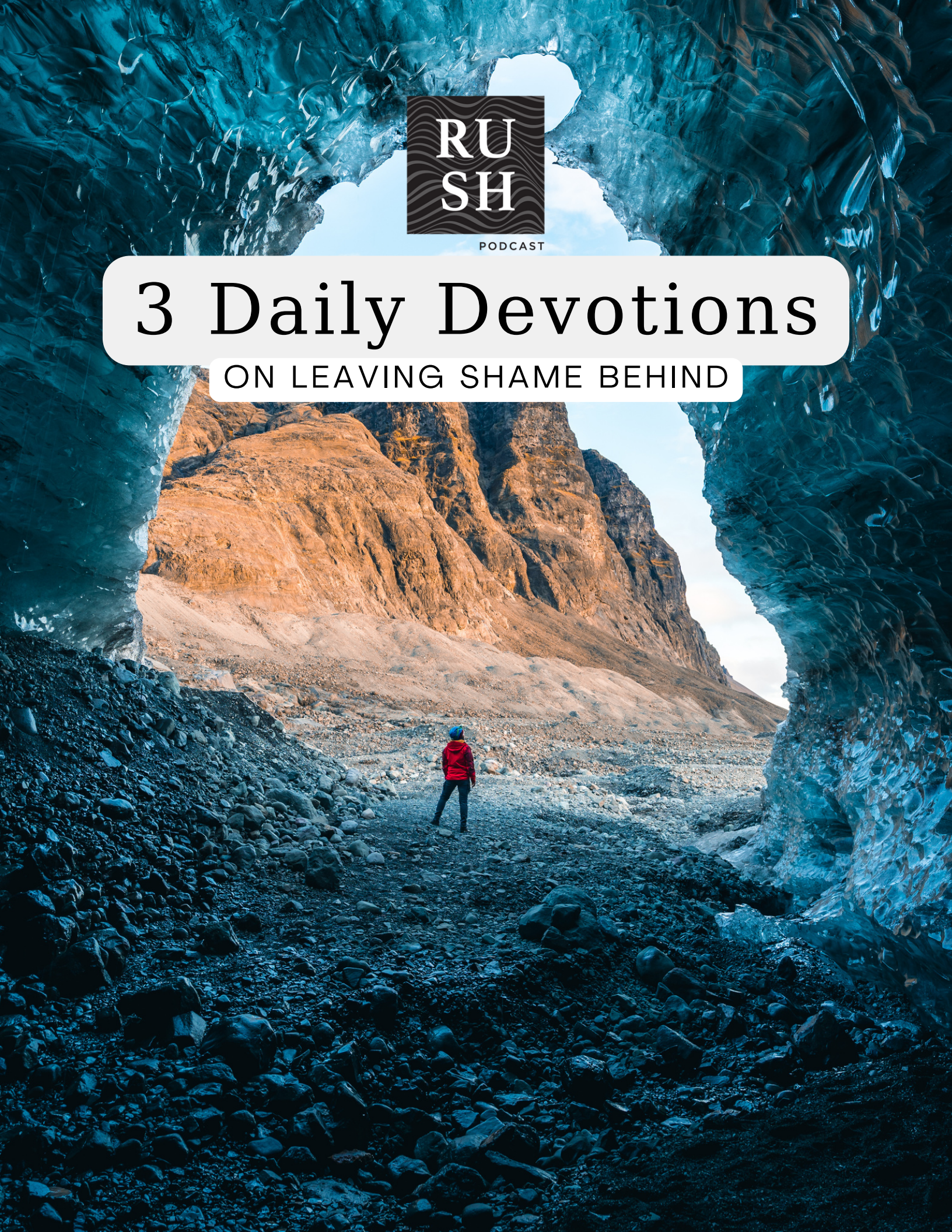

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PODCAST
3 Daily Devotions
ON LEAVING SHAME BEHIND

The Transformation of Sin, Shame, & Pride

M E S S A G E :

It’s been a long time since we’ve talked. I understand. I know why. There was a point when you turned from me. You thought your sin was too great, that I was disappointed in you, that you could not reach me anymore. After sin comes, you see, shame is often right behind. It buries itself into your heart, taking residence there. It is one thing to sin, to do something that hurts your own heart and makes you feel distant from me. It is another thing to let the sin be what decides your identity, your past, your future, the deepest truths about who you are.

When you let sin fester, when you let it remain in your heart—shame comes and whispers in the dark: *you are not okay, you can never change, you are not loved and desired anymore. So hide, hide from God. You are not wanted here.*

Shame lies to you. It wants to pull you apart from me. And I leave it up to you to decide if shame is what you want to believe, if shame is where you want to stay. But let me tell you this—it is *not* for you; it is not where you are meant to stay. Shame is *not* what you are made for daughter, son. You are made to be with me.

Here is how shame begins: it begins with sin. Sin that is unconfessed—not repented for—breeds shame, which breeds pride. When pride is driving your mindset, your behavior, it is because shame has convinced you that your sin is more powerful than my Son—that his sacrifice, his ransoming his life for yours, is not enough to bring you back to me. This is because pride is the child of shame. Both pride and shame are dangerous. Both are death. Both need to be destroyed now, you see.

My love is greater than any sin that separates. Come, let your soul confess. Jesus is stronger than shame. Come, watch Him intercede on your behalf. Holy Spirit is more powerful than pride. Come, let Him destroy it—let Him help you repent and turn away from that old life that has convinced you to be your own god.

It was sin that separated us, but I am a God of mercy. I do not hold grudges. And my Son comes—wipes away your sin—and unites us again. It is you I see, Just you. So, you know the next steps now. You aren’t stuck. You aren’t alone. Will you come closer now? Confess? Repent? Do you hear Holy Spirit whispering to your heart?

E X E R C I S E :

Our enemy, the great deceiver, the father of lies—he tries to convince us that whatever we've done is just so big and so bad, so different and so much worse, that it can never be fixed or forgiven or redeemed.

This sin and this shame—*and they have to go*.

Because, when sin remains and shame stays, bad things will follow. We get stuck, isolated, overwhelmed when sin is ignored and rationalized and denied because of shame.

But let me ask you this: Do you believe that sin and shame *can go*?

Sometimes our sin and shame have been with for us so long, it's hard to believe that they're not going to be with us for the rest of our lives—that they haven't become fixtures of our identities.

In his book *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis wrote about a man who had struggled with a particular sin for a long time—so long, in fact, that he no longer believed God could help him. In some ways, he no longer *wanted* God to help him. He'd come to doubt God, to fear Him, actually—because, though this man may have hated his struggle, he believed it had become a part of him, part of his identity. So, when God, through an angel, offered restoration, the man himself feels threatened and resists—*at first, at least.*

In the allegory, Lewis depicted sin as a red lizard sitting on the this man's shoulder, whispering lies into his ear. The very presence of the lizard is disgusting and disturbing to us as readers—and no doubt to this character Lewis created too. But the man had given the lizard access for a long time. He'd allowed the lizard to spin his lies for a long time. And so the man had become confused. The lizard's presence had become familiar to him. The man began to have a hard time distinguishing truth from falsehood; friend from foe. He has a hard time trusting that allowing God to destroy the lizard would mean freedom, and not death for him, too.

When we allow sin and shame to linger, you and I are just like this man—believing that the way we've chosen, the way without Jesus, is somehow best for us. We begin to manage and bargain and justify and excuse our sin. And we begin to believe that it's somehow okay for our sin and shame to remain—for a bit longer, at least. And so we give sin and shame more and more access to our lives. And they whisper more and more . . . and our confusion grows—and so does our separation from God.

Jesus is relentless though. And He loves us too much to let us go. In *The Great Divorce*, the man, exhausted, finally relents and surrenders—and the angel reaches out his flaming hands and kills the lizard . . . and what happens next is amazing. From a oily red reptile, on the ground with back broken, the lizard transforms into a silver-white stallion that carries the now beautifully transformed man on his back. With the angel standing by, they ride further up, and further into heaven.

There is no question, sin and shame separate us from God. And it may have felt right to hold onto yours up until now. You may have accepted some pretty clever rationalizations as to why the sin and the shame in your life aren't so bad. But Jesus loves us so much that He came to set all of us free from sin and shame. *All of us*. Why? Because He and His Father couldn't stand the idea of eternity (or even one more minute of this life) without you, apart from you.

So, I'll ask you again, do you believe that sin and shame *can* go?

They can go. They must go. And they will go. Because Jesus defeated sin and death on the cross. So, all we have to do now, like the man in C.S. Lewis's allegory, is let Jesus in. All we have to do is to turn toward Him, toward a fresh, new start.

Does that sound like something you'd like? A fresh, new start?

Now, what sin are *you* living with? What sin have you not yet confessed? What sin is causing you to live in shame?

Lets pray a few verses from Psalm 139. And let's ask Holy Spirit for some help in revealing to us the sin that lingers in our hearts and in our lives, right now.

God, I invite your searching gaze into my heart.
Examine me through and through;
find out everything that may be hidden within me.
Put me to the test and sift through all my anxious cares.

See if there is any path of pain I'm walking on,
and lead me back to your glorious, everlasting ways—
the path that brings me back to you.

And now, just relax your mind, your neck, your torso, your hands. Let's wait on Jesus. Expect that He will indeed search your heart. And expect that He will lead you back to Him—lead you toward mercy, toward forgiveness, and toward healing.

What are you seeing? What are you hearing?

Now, just like the man in the story, release your sin and your shame to Jesus. Trust Him. Confess them to Him, now.

Repent of them too. Turn your back on your sin. Tell Jesus you want to live free of this shame. And ask Jesus to destroy them both.

Imagine Him doing that now.

What is Jesus doing with your sin? What does He do with you shame?

Whatever Jesus showed you, whatever He said to you, whatever you saw Him do, if it fits within the principles of Scripture, then pray in agreement with Him. Thank Him for coming and beginning the process of dealing with the sin and the shame in your life. And trust that, just like the angel did with the lizard on the man's shoulder, He is now transforming your sin and shame into something beautiful and something good.

Battle Against Complacency

M E S S A G E :

It can feel like you are in a holding pattern. You aren't sure what to do, where I am leading. So, you stay where you are. Not moving. Not growing. Not challenging what things the world tells you that you should question rather than just accept. Come now, I don't want you to be complacent: trusting in Me does not mean you are passive.

Let me tell you some things: This world is not a calm one. It shakes, and it moves. It is filled with brutal messages and turbulent situations. While you can trust in Me, there is a part you are invited to play in this world too: Move forward with Me; consecrate your mind and your heart and your body to Me. It is necessary for you to be under my covering—have yourself prepared for the battle that wages against you each day.

Listen: You are wanted on the battlefield. You are wanted to stand by my side. You are chosen, and as you stand, I bring increased faith, increased hope, increased joy to your heart.

Now, I need you armed for battle. So notice what bothers you about the pain of this world. Notice what is needed. Notice how love is needed. Notice how you are needed to use your talents, the particular way I have crafted you and loved you, to pursue others' hearts.

There is a war. There is a battling raging around you right now. It's a battle for your heart. It's a battle for the hearts of those all around you. Are you going to stand there, defenseless, unaware, apathetic to attack? Or are you going to put on your shield of faith, your helmet of salvation, your shoes of peace, your belt of truth, your breastplate of righteousness, your sword of the Spirit, and stand with Me, knowing that it is my power in you that equips you to do anything worth doing—pursue deeper relationship with Me, for the glory of the kingdom that is here, in my name?

It is coming. It is coming. The kingdom is here with Me, and it is coming still. You are in the midst of battle that tries to make you believe that you are okay, hiding in the dark, waiting for rescue to come. You are in the midst of battle that tries to make you believe you are okay, frozen in comparison and complacency, ignoring the cries all around you, so many people's hearts.

I am here. I am the King in the battle. Using love and hope and the power of my Father to bring glory to his name. Do not forget that *you too* are made to bring glory to His name. So, go, stand up. Prepare yourself for battle. You are in it, whether you know it or not. Stand. Do not cower. I have made you to fight. You are ready. Watch Me move. I move in you. Take a step now. Lets go.

E X E R C I S E :

We’re in a battle. Even in the calm. Even on our most peaceful of days. Though we can’t see it, a spiritual battle rages all around us. Our enemy is fighting tooth and nail for our hearts and the hearts of our loved ones. He wants them, and he’ll do anything to have them. And the way he fights is down and dirty. He’s despicable, and he’s relentless.

So what do we do in the face of a threat like that? How do we respond to that kind of evil? Well, Holy Spirit, the very spirit of our Warrior King, Jesus, just told us: “Go, stand up. Prepare yourself for battle. You are in it, whether you know it or not. Stand. Do not cower. I have made you to fight. You are ready. Watch me move. I move in you. Take a step now. Let's go.”

Those are amazing words. But what do they mean, in practical terms . . . *for today . . . for right now*? How do we fight a spiritual battle here in the physical world? How do we take a step, practically? How do we go into battle, today?

Well, Holy Spirit told us that, too. And it’s just as powerful. He said, “notice what bothers you about the pain of this world. Notice what is needed, how love is needed.” And then He said, consider “the particular way I have crafted you and loved you, to pursue the hearts of others.”

So, how do we begin? How do we take a step? How do we step into the battle? Well, how about this? Let’s start with a deep breath? Let’s start with relaxing our shoulders and our arms. Relaxing the muscles in our backs.

Now, draw an imaginary circle around yourself—one with a two meter radius, you at the center.

Can you picture your circle—extending out two meters in front of you, two meters behind you, two meters to the left, two meters to the right?

Now, consider this: on an average day, who comes into your circle?

How many people come within two meters of your person on an average day? Who are they?

Picture their faces. What are their names? Can you see them, in your mind, breaking into your circle? A spouse giving you a kiss in the morning? A child giving you a hug before school? A cashier taking payment at a coffee shop? A customer shaking your hand after a sale? A colleague sitting beside you in a meeting? A friend sharing a meal with you at your home or theirs? A stranger standing next to you on the subway or in line at the post office?

Who are your “two meter” people?

Now, switch gears, and think about what these people need. The people you’ve been picturing, notice their needs. How do they hurt? What are their desires? What are their problems? Do they need friendship? Mercy? Encouragement? Love? Tough love? Hope?

Now, let’s switch gears again and consider how you might be able to meet some of those needs. Consider the ways—*large and small*—you might bring goodness and love into the lives of the people who come into your world on an average day, who breach your two meter bubble on a regular basis.

This is one way we fight. It’s one of the most important ways. And it’s never more complicated than this. You see, we’re here, in these places, for such a time as this. You’re here for a reason. Your feet are on this ground, right here, right now, for such a time as this. And your mission field, your battlefield, is the ground on which you stand now.

So, “rise up,” as Holy Spirit called you to do. And, as He just said to you: “Notice what is needed, how love is needed, how you are needed to use your talents, the particular way I have crafted you and loved you, to pursue the hearts of others.”

Rise up, my friend, and get into this fight.

Jesus, I confess that I’ve responded to the urgency of the battle raging around me with complacency. With selfishness. With too little faith and too little love. I’ve spent so much time—too much time—focused on myself, ignoring the needs of the people around me. But I’m done with all of that. I don’t want to do any of that anymore.

From now on, I stand with You. I follow You. I'll follow You anywhere. I'll follow You into battle. I'll follow You into the very heart of the battle. I'll run toward the hard things, not away.

But I need Your help. I need Your strength and wisdom and love in me, as I begin to move from passivity to action. I need Your strength and wisdom and love in me to love the people in my life with enthusiasm and kindness and gentleness. Fill me with Your Spirit, Jesus.

In Your name, Amen.

Prison of Resignation

M E S S A G E :

There is more for you—more than this place of worry and stagnation. You have decided you are not okay, but yet you don't take a step to try to change. You recognize how your choices led you to where you are now. You have regret about the past. But you don't like to think about all this too much. You tell yourself you're practical, realistic. But really, you doubt things in your life could ever change. So you silence your heart, push away hope, refuse to wonder if there could ever be another way.

There is a stubbornness in you, a hard-heartedness. It is a power like complacency, but it is worse: it is resignation. You have become resigned to living life the way you have always lived it. You admire the choices of others—noticing the joy and freedom they seem to have. But you are resigned to your fate. You have so little faith that things in your life will change.

Because there is so much you feel you can't control, you assume nothing is what you can control. You have chosen powerlessness as your excuse. It brings you comfort, in its twisted way, because it explains, you think, why things in your life are the way they are now. You are convinced of this: you are powerless to change your circumstances. you are powerless to have a different mindset, you are powerless to choose a different way of living. You have let your attitude, your perception, about your life be a noose around your neck. Your own warped perception is killing your hope in a life that could be so different than this one. You're worshipping a life that lacks freedom, lacks faith, and you refuse to believe that there is a different way to approach life. This resignation makes you blind to Me.

I am powerful, daughter, son. I am not contained by the rules of this twisted kingdom. It is not my own. My kingdom, my power, my love, my hope, my joy, my freedom and light and resurrection power is available to you, here, now, if you want it. You don't have to wait. You don't have to let this spirit of resignation control you. You don't have to let its fingers tighten around your neck, pushing you into the corner, trapped, so you can barely breathe. Why do you wait? Why do you choose death instead of life? Why do you not see I am here, right here, asking you if you want my love to fill you?

I stand here, outside the door, knocking. And your heart doesn't let Me in. Rather, you want to stay in the room by yourself, the death of resignation clouding your vision, your hope. But you *could* let Me in. Right here, right now. You *could* let Me in and nothing would stay the same; everything would change. You would change, your mindset would change, your attitude about your life would change. This is new life. This is kingdom power. This is choosing to believe that my kingdom is more powerful than this one—that light conquerors darkness, that love destroys all doubt, all hate.

Do not hate yourself. I love you. Do not stay here, in the dark. There is good here, for you. Open the door wide now. Don't hold back. There is nothing to lose and everything to gain. For this world, this attitude, this prison is not for you. I am for you. My love is for you. Let me loosen that noose—completely destroy this mindset that keeps you trapped here. You are made for freedom, daughter, son. Leave this place. I have so much more for you.

E X E R C I S E :

The victim mindset is the belief that one's identity is as a continual victim of bad circumstances, or of bad luck, or of bad genes, or of the bad behavior of other people. People who've adopted this mindset typically have been victimized and experienced trauma, on some level, at some point in the past, but they've also adopted an *identity* of victimhood—of helplessness, powerlessness, and resignation.

The victim mindset is insidious because once a person's adopted it, it's often difficult for them to recognize that they've done so. It's what they truly believe about themselves and about the world—but they've also begun to enjoy the benefits. You see, because there's always someone else, or something else, to blame for everything, the supposed victim gets to avoid all feelings of personal guilt and all sense of personal responsibility.

What people who've adopted the victim mindset don't see is the *harm* in causes—the harm they're doing to themselves and the harm they're doing to others. Because this mindset stands in the way of personal growth and healing and transformation. Personal struggles, issues, and problems never get addressed—because they are always someone *else's* fault—and so, they're never overcome. And when, as a result, bitterness and hard-heartedness set in among people close to the supposed victim, those things are just more things the victim can point fingers at.

But Jesus comes to set us free—*all of us*. He comes now to set us free from the prisons of our own making, the prisons of our own minds—*if we want Him to*. He can free us from the victim mindset—*if we are willing to do our parts*.

You see, in God's Kingdom here on earth, everything happens as a result of two things: grace and obedience. Grace is the power of God in our lives to do what we could never do on our own. I'm going to say that one more time: grace is the power of God in our lives to do what we could never do on our own. And obedience is simply action—*action taken by us*.

Jesus is standing by with as much grace as we'll ever need. So, all we *really* need, is to act.

And we must. We must act. We must act in the opposite of what our feelings of resignation tells us to do. We must act in the opposite of these beliefs that things will never change. We must act according to our *true* identities, not as victims, but as favored sons and daughters of God.

Against “troubles, pressures, and problems,” against “persecutions, deprivations, dangers, and death threats,” wrote the Apostle Paul, “we triumph over them all, for God has made us to be more than conquerors, and his demonstrated love is our glorious victory over everything!” That’s from Romans chapter 8 .

We have what it takes, dear friend. We are powerful. With Jesus Christ dwelling within us, we each have *everything* we need to push back the powers of darkness in our lives. *That’s* what’s true.

So, we *must* act.

How? Well, we can pray—because our prayers have great power. James, the brother of Jesus said so, in the book of James chapter 5, verse 16 . And we can confess our attitudes of victimhood. For if we do, we *will* be healed. That’s also from James 5:16 . We can confess our resignation, and our pride, and our lack of faith. We can confess our beliefs that Jesus isn’t loving enough or powerful enough to change us, or to change our circumstances. We can confess our belief that His Spirit in us isn't enough. And we can repent. We can turn our backs on our false beliefs. If we do, our sins will be “blotted out.” It says so in Acts chapter 3, verse 19 . And we can begin declare, to God and to ourselves, that we want to believe something different. That we want to *live* in a *truth* mindset, not a victim mindset. That we want to be conquerors, overcomers.

It’s time for us to reject the idea that we are helpless, powerless. It’s time for us to shake off our resignation, and to experience the freedom that is our true inheritance. It is time to come out of this prison of victimhood. It’s time to act.

Jesus, you heal broken hearts. You set us free from our wrong beliefs. And I need you to come now. I confess I've believed I was a victim, not an overcomer; an orphan, not a son or daughter of God. I confess I've believed things would never change—that Your love and Your grace wasn't powerful enough to change me or my circumstances. But I repent of those beliefs, now. I won't believe them any longer. I won't live with them any longer. I won't. But I need Your help. Fill me with Your Spirit. Fill me with the power to change. Fill me with the power to overcome. Fill me with Your love and Your truth, Your hope and Your joy. Fill me with Your freedom.

I choose life, rather than death. In Your name, Jesus, Amen.

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