

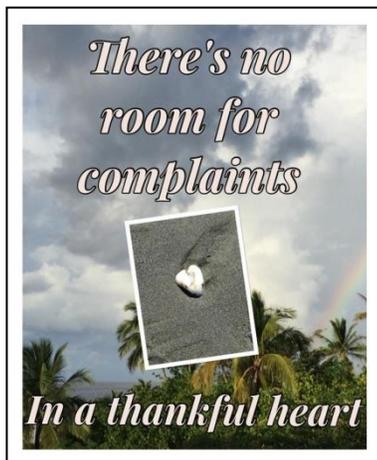
A Thankful Heart - (2 Timothy 3:16, Galatians 5:1)

I found myself under a bit of conviction yesterday as I listened to a guest speaker at church, that shouldn't be surprising since, **"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."** (2 Timothy 3:16) Still, you go to church to worship, to learn, to hear from the Lord, but conviction, well, it tends to make one a little uncomfortable.

The sermon title was, *"Don't Let Sinful Habits Tell You What To Do."* As I heard the pastor describe the various "sins" that are so visible around us - those addicted to drugs, alcohol, pornography, over spending, over eating, you know, those sins that destroy a person, usually along with all relationships close to them - controlling, sneaky sins that seem pleasurable but lead to destruction. I sat there in hardy agreement, yes, too many people let sinful habits tell them what to do.

But then, the Spirit began to speak louder than the pastor's words (beware, the Spirit of God can strike deeper than the ears can hear, going straight to the heart.) When He spoke, I didn't even have to ask myself the questions: *What habit have I allowed in my own life that tells me what to do? Or, what habit have I fed that has nothing to do with being godly, righteous or holy?*

No, there was no need to ask. He was more than good to make it plain that the habit of complaining has been telling me what to do for far too long. Like the Apostle Paul who kept doing the very thing he didn't want to do, I have tried to be rid of this sin for many years but complaining is easy, and admittedly, quite often the first thing out of my mouth in the morning.



Have you noticed there is always something to complain about - *It's too hot, it's too cold* - Like the three bears we could go on and on with our complaints rather than just being thankful for what we have.

Just as quickly as the Spirit convicted, He provided the solution - *There's no room for complaints in a thankful heart.*

It's true. Sin is always a matter of the heart, we tend to try to make it about the flesh, don't we? But if our heart is right with God, and seeking the things of God, we won't sin, that's a simple fact. If we begin to take every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ, we can actually begin to change, be obedient, and develop a heart of gratitude rather than a complaining spirit.

We're given this instruction by God in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 - **"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."** If we are to be obedient there must always be a heart of thankfulness. Don't misunderstand, it doesn't stem from being thankful for the circumstances in our life, those can be pretty crummy, but to be thankful to our God who gives all the grace we need to get through that crummy stuff we encounter.

It's often as we express thankfulness that He reveals even more blessing, seemingly, it's as if our thankfulness opens the hands of God to bless us more, but in reality, it's having a heart of thankfulness that opens our eyes to be able to see more and more of the blessings that are already there. Even in Philippians 4:6-7, Paul tells us to not be anxious about anything but ask for God's help, and not only ask but to ask with thankfulness. Thankfulness puts into perspective that the Lord is God Almighty, able to do exceedingly, abundantly more than we can ask. He sees the bigger picture and knows the final outcome. Now that's something to be thankful for, because, Girlfriend, if He sees and He knows, then He's got it covered! It's truly hard to have a complaining spirit and a thankful one at the same time.

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Maybe you need to hear this - *YOU do NOT have to do what sin tells you to do!* By the power of His Spirit within you, as a believer in Christ Jesus, tell it resolutely, NO! And, realize that the only power that sin has over you is the power you allow it to have! We know that part of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control, that means we have been empowered to break those habits that have been telling us what to do for so long, as we look to Him, He provides the self-control we need.

One thing is for sure, whatever our habitual sin may be, we must give God control over it now. Today! Let us live as the overcomers we are! Grateful that we are no longer slaves to sin. The Holy Spirit is more powerful than any sinful temptation, even when that sin has become a habit in our life. He provides a way of escape so that we may endure it.

Within the pages of the Bible God gives us a game plan for breaking sinful habits. Part of that is to stop every time we commit it and confess it as sin. Realign our perspective and agree with God that HE is worthy of far more than that behavior from us, especially considering the saving grace He's given us. Then, we have to be prepared, He may want us to apologize to anyone we have made part of our sin, either in word or deed, because more than likely we have caused them to stumble also, especially so when it comes to complaining.

His word says to repent - meaning to turn and do the opposite. When it comes to complaining, the opposite of that would be speaking thankfulness. Now, there is always something to be thankful for, even if it's just the fact He stopped you to point out that you just sinned! I think it's important that you know that He's not pointing it out because He's a big ogre ready to zap you, but rather, He has such a beautiful plan for you, one that is for your good, and in His righteousness He can have no part of sin. It is to YOUR benefit that He convicts you. It is to YOUR benefit that you repent.

How sweet it would be if the controlling habit in our life was a heart full of thankfulness and praise, to be set free from whatever habitual sin we find our self committing (including a complaining spirit). Take heart, Girlfriend, it's not only possible but in Christ it has already been accomplished! All we have to do is accept it and then walk in obedience to the Lord God.

***"It was for freedom that Christ set us free;
Therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery."***

Galatians 5:1

Father, it is with a grateful heart that I thank You for breaking that yoke of slavery for us through Christ Jesus who died in our place. Catch us up short each time that we step outside Your plan and will for our lives. Thank You for the truth that there is no room for complaints in a heart that is thankful. I ask that you fill us to the full so that we only speak words of encouragement and thankfulness, all to Your glory. I pray for each sinful habit to be put in its proper place, the past! Thank You that Your Spirit empowers us to live as overcomers today! All because of Your grace. Thank You, in Christ's name, Amen.

Read it for yourself:

2 Timothy 3:16

Romans 6:5-6, 17-18

Romans 7:14-15

1 Corinthians 10:13

Galatians 5:1, 22-25

1 Thessalonians 5:18