

Not Getting Free?

I once met a chef who told me he came to Christ after an evening meal in a restaurant. As his small group of friends prayed in a circle round him, the addictions to drugs and alcohol dropped off him; his fingers, yellow stained from nicotine, changed to white during the prayer.

When he ended up pastoring a church a few years later, he found that part of his job was keeping the peace between two groups of converts. One group experienced immediate release through prayer like he did. The second group found they had a terrific struggle to get free from their problems, which took many months. They tended to envy the first group who in turn looked down on the second group, saying “What’s the matter with you lot? Where is your faith?”

This article is for people who don’t get free quickly.

At a seminar on healing at New Wine, an annual Christian conference in the UK, David Pytches once said “You just have to go with what God is doing. For example, at the end of the Sunday evening service, the people line up for prayer. Some get healed instantly, some need to come back week after week. For some, nothing seems to happen, but then, for no obvious reason, on Thursday morning, bingo, they are healed. Just go with what God is doing.”

I am reminded of the Psalmist, when ‘the nations surrounded him’. A vivid picture of someone overwhelmed. His response? In the name of the Lord, he cut them off. But then the nations came again, surrounding him on every side. Once again, he cut them off in the name of the Lord. However, it still was not over: they ‘swarmed around him like bees’ and he had to cut them off a third time. Thankfully, they died away like burning thorns (1).

So the message seems to be, keep at it, and don’t get disheartened if it takes a while. Graham Powell of New Zealand had to fight every day for eighteen months before he finally got free. He tells the story in his fine book *Christian Set Yourself Free*, which I have found so helpful (2).

I know that in the Gospels, Jesus’ healings were instantaneous, except on one occasion when a second prayer was needed (3), but I don’t think we should be discouraged if we don’t get free all at once. Maybe God has something to teach us through the experience. As somebody once put it, how can you learn to be longsuffering without going through long suffering? The important thing is not to give up, it seems to me.

David Pennant, Woking, UK

Notes

1. Psalm 118:10-12. The complete Psalm is one of encouragement.
2. *Christian Set Yourself Free*, New Wine Press, 1986.
3. Mark 8:22-26.