

Firmly Held ...

By Christina Dixon

Imagine the scene. There is a damsel in distress. Her helpless body lies bound hand and foot on a conveyor belt, with her head mere inches from an automated hammer designed to mold metal by dropping with tons of pressure. The hero is several yards away forced by the villain's deception, to keep his hand on a button. If he releases the button the conveyor belt will jerk forward moving steady, yet quickly toward the hammer. In mere seconds the damsel would be crushed, her life violently taken away. Calculating with awesome accuracy, our hero attempts to evaluate whether or not he should let go of the button and race to rescue the damsel before her fragile life is snuffed out. Sadly, he determines there's not enough time.

Scanning the room again, eyes filled with intensity, the hero spots a crow bar just a few short feet away. Just steps beyond it, the cogs and wheels that turn the conveyor belt come into view. Again, calculating his timing our hero determines that he can leap for the crow bar, jam it into the cogs of the machine, stop the conveyor belt and save the damsel. Whew!

As I share this familiar scenario, women may see themselves as the damsel. I imagine that men may see themselves as the hero. But what if the damsel was your troubled relationship with a loved one, the hero was Jesus Christ, and the crowbar was you? Would the Lord find you strong enough to use as an instrument to resist the pressure of the vicious cycles that may be moving your relationship toward the crushing blows of death?

Sadly many in our society find that we are unable to resist relational pressure. It's so much easier to simply resort to self-preservation mode. It feels so much safer emotionally to just let the relationship go. "I don't have to put up with that! I can do bad all by myself" we say. How true that is. Our sin nature bears witness to the truth of those statements. However, one thing is certain. We can't "do good" all by ourselves. We desperately need God - especially when our relationships with loved ones are dying.

In our culture today, too often trouble doesn't strengthen relationships. Too many times it only exposes the reality that we consider our relationships with others to be just as disposable as used paper plates at a picnic.

Have you ever felt like you've been jammed into a tight spot with pressure coming at you from all sides? Have the circumstances around you seemed like metal grinding so loud, there's no question that something is about to break down, but you're just not sure what? In times like these, our emotions often cause us to identify with the role of the distressed damsel. After all, don't things look hopeless? Don't we feel helpless? Can't we see the dark gloomy clouds of despair on the horizon? Frankly, in moments like these believing in Someone we cannot see or hear makes no sense to our finite self-centered minds.

In marriage the words, "or worse" don't seem possible on our wedding day as we look into the eyes of the one we love so intensely. The words, "for better" seem more probable. So, we find ourselves unprepared for the pressures that threaten to annihilate the love we professed would last a lifetime. Yet, in those moments that we clearly define as "the worst" there is no question that we need God's help to strengthen our resolve.

Faith encourages us to embrace the unseen reality that there is Hope. There is Help. We're challenged to truly believe that when we ask the Lord to place His hand upon our lives that He *will* hold us firm and steady. That's when the cogs of relationship madness become powerless to break us down. As a result, when we feel we've been suddenly jammed into a tight spot and the grinding noise of our circumstance increases, we are free to genuinely trust Him.

In fact, we can become so empowered by His grasp that, we realize in the depths of our being that His Spirit within us is making us strong enough to stand in loving truth against the pressure of unhealthy vicious cycles. Hence we experience peace because we *know* that our life is **firmly held** in the Hero's strong hands.



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